

## G.O. Vinokur's 'new class approach'. A possible model for A.P. Platonov's poetic language?

Ben W. Dhooge (Ghent University)

### *Instead of an introduction: Platonov's peculiar language use*

The peculiar language use of A.P. Platonov strikes every reader. It is one of the main characteristics of the writer's literary works written between the end of the 1920s and the mid-1930s, for example of *Čevengur* (*Chevengur*, 1927), *Kotlovan* (*The Foundation Pit*, 1929-1930) and *Sčastlivaja Moskva* (*Happy Moscow*, 1933-1936). As E.A. Jablovskij put it, when reading Platonov it is impossible to ignore the poetic language as if it were mere "building material" and focus solely on the contents of the literary work. Moreover, "[i]t is impossible to read similar texts 'past' the language it is written in, for we are far from always able to divide the linguistic information into the 'essential' and 'secondary', we are unsure about our right to ignore one or another linguistic nuance as being insignificant [...]". (Яблоков 2009: 252)<sup>1</sup>

The peculiarity of Platonov's poetic language – from now on we will speak of 'Platonov's poetic language' to refer to the poetic language as it is seen in the works written between the end of the 1920s and the mid-1930s – consists in a conscious<sup>2</sup> and consequent deviation from the linguistic norms. The first dominant type of this linguistic deviation consists in a play with communist language elements and clichés. For example, as A.P. Tsvetkov (1983: 10), V.V. Bujlov (1997: 34), N.A. Kupina (1999: 171), and Z.S. Sandžigarskaja (2004: 130) all have shown, Platonov actively parodies the methods of word formation that were popular in the post-revolutionary years. As a result platonovian nonce words appear. Not infrequently, these 'platonovisms' have an estranging and even comic effect on the reader. See, for example, *детский персонал* – *children's staff* (K, 58<sup>3</sup>), which clearly follows the same word-formation strategy as *кулацкий элемент* – *kulak type*. Or the following examples, all of which are actualizations of different suffix-based word-formation models: *сознательница* – *a politically conscious woman* (K, 46), *унущенец* – *a negligent person* (K 67), *забеговищество* – *the fact that one is running too far ahead* (in a pejorative sense) (K, 106), and many more besides. The play with post-revolutionary clichés also consists in a tendency towards literal interpretation. This can be the case with socio-political words with both a literal and a figurative meaning, like in this example: *мужик было упал, но побоялся далеко уклоняться, дабы Чиклин не подумал про него ничего зажиточного* – *the peasant nearly fell, but he was careful not to lean too far so that Čiklin would not think anything prosperous of him (i.e. of being a kulak – BD)* (K, 70). (Cf. Seifrid 1992: 94-95, 162-175; Сейфрид 1994: 312-215; Михеев 2003: 323-341). In other cases not separate words-concepts are understood literally, but whole idioms. (Кожевникова 1990: 170; Бобылёв 1989: 28) See, for example, the following dialogue, where Lenin's metaphorical utterance "Нам истерические призывы не нужны. Нам нужна мерная поступь железных батальонов пролетариата" ("We do not need hysterical calls. We need the measured tread / steady advance of the iron battalions of the proletariat") is combined with the idiom *железная поступь* – *iron tread*:

Нам нужна железная поступь пролетарских батальонов – нам губком циркуляр про это прислал, а ты сюда прочих припер! Какая же тебе поступь у босого человека?

– Ничего, [...] пускай они босые, зато у них пятки так натрудились, что туда шурупы можно отверткой заворачивать. Они тебе весь мир во время всемирной революции босиком пройдут... (Ї, 441)

We need the iron tread of the proletarian battalions – the guberniya committee has sent us an official instruction on that, but who have you landed us with? More *others*! What tread does a barefooted person have, in your opinion?

- Don't worry [...] even if they are barefooted, their heels have been overworked to such an extent, that one can drive screws in there with a screwdriver. During the worldwide revolution they will walk over the whole world barefoot.

The second dominant type of Platonov's poetic language consists in a regular – even more frequent than the first dominant type which is only seemingly most apparent – deviation from the microsyntactic norms of the Russian language. (Cf., among others, Шимонюк 1977, 1997; Кобозева & Лауфер 1990; Кожевникова 1990; Колесова 1992; Бобрин 1995; Михеев 2000, 2003) These microsyntactic norms determine the possibility to combine words or, more correctly, lexemes. They depend directly on the semantic characteristics of the lexemes involved – valence structures, collocation ranges and other semantically conditioned language rules (i.e. rules which are not related to the semantics of separate lexemes or (a) group(s) of lexemes, but to the semantics of the Russian language as a whole, to linguistic logic). In other words, an essential part of Platonov's unusual language use consists in the combination of words – more correctly, lexemes – that according to the rules of the Russian language are not supposed to be combined for semantic reasons. The immediate effect consists in the following: every non-normative utterance generates a semantic shift which, in the first place, is occasional, depending on the linguistic microcontext – i.e. all the lexemes used in the non-normative utterance – and the immediate textual context.<sup>4</sup>

Let us have a look at a few examples of these “semantico-syntactic deformations” (Шимонюк 1997; Печенина 1993: 125). One kind of semantico-syntactic deformation which occurs very frequently in Platonov's mature oeuvre consists in a deviation from the rule of coordination of likes – lexemes that do not belong to the same semantic category (e.g. by not matching each other in terms of abstraction) cannot be coordinated. For example, *Москва издали и загадочно улыбалась ему* – *Moscow mysteriously and from a distance smiled upon him* (SM, 40). Or: *рука пахла теплом и соломой* – *the hand smelled of warmth and straw*. (Ї, 413) Another type is the pleonastic or tautological word combination, consisting in the redundant lexicalization of an element which, by definition, is already fully enclosed in, or even fully coincides with, the semantics of the governing lexeme. See, for example, *согбенный корпус тела* – *a bent body torso / torso of the body* (K, 34). The platonovism *соображал о появившемся человеке* – *he considered about the person who showed up* (Ї, 393) is a deformation of the morphosyntactic collocation range of *соображать*. One can *соображать что-либо* – *consider something*, but not *\*соображать о чем-либо* – *consider about something*. It is possible that the collocation range of *соображать* was substituted with that of the semantically close *думать* – *to think*. Not only morphosyntactic, but also lexico-semantic collocation ranges are commonly deformed by Platonov. In *Happy Moscow* we see the combination *пустая, оголтелая земля* – *the empty, unbridled / frenzied land* (SM, 64). Usually *оголтелый* is only used with people (e.g., *оголтелый враг* – *a frenzied enemy*) or with actions carried out by people or other living beings (e.g., *оголтелая суета* – *unbridled vanity*, *оголтелый террор* – *unbridled terror*). Here it is not difficult to think of semantically close words that may be combined with *земля* – *беспредельный* or *безграничный* – *boundless, infinite, limitless* and even *чрезвычайный* – *extreme*. Or one can think of a substitution on the basis of a paronym,

*оголённый* – *bare*, which actualizes the first adjective in this word combination – *empty*. Another case of Platonov's semantico-syntactic deformations consists in the extension of the normative valence structure of a verb. In *ответить из своего высохшего рта* – *to answer out of his dried-up mouth* (К, 29) an actantial role or semantic actant of origin is added, which *ответить* normally does not have. In some cases this kind of addition can be interpreted as the simultaneous realization of different aspects (a physical action, a desired result, a consequence) of one action or situation.<sup>5</sup> From a formal point of view, the expression *попрощаться рукой* – *to say goodbye with his / her hand* (С, 398), for example, is a case of valence structure extension. The verb cannot have an actant of instrument (but it can have a second subject, which is expressed through the preposition *с* and the instrumental case: *попрощаться с кем-либо* – *to say goodbye to somebody*). This actant of instrument, however, may be the result of a substitution of the actantial structure of another verb, expressing a different aspect of the situation 'to say goodbye' – not the result, but the physical action accompanying the situation: *помахать рукой* – *to wave one's hand*. In this way, two aspects of the same situation get connected into one expression.<sup>6</sup>

### *The enigmatic coming into being of Platonov's poetic language*

Platonov's peculiar language use started to manifest itself only after 1926. It seems that the writer's two-year literary silence between 1924 and 1926 played a crucial role in this. At that time – but this process had started already in the early 1920s – Platonov was tortured by doubts about how to help build communist society – by becoming a professional writer or by continuing his engineering and melioration works. (Лангепак 1995: 32, 36-38, 73, 84, 87-88, 92) After a difficult time in Moscow, where he was fired from the Central Committee of the Union of Land and Forest Workers in 1926, Platonov was sent to Tambov to work as a hydraulic engineer by the People's Commissariat for Agriculture. (Корниенко 1991; Антонова & Аронов 2003: 637-639; Платонов 2009а: 443) Professionally things did not go very well in Tambov, but Platonov managed to write a lot in this period. (Cf. also Платонов 2009а). Some of the novellas and short stories he wrote in 1926 and 1927 are clearly experimental and illustrate that in those years Platonov was in search of his own poetic voice. See, for example, the montage novella 'Антисексус' ('Antisexus'), the epistolary 'Однажды любившие' ('Those who loved once'), or the historical novella 'Епифанские шлюзы' ('The Sluices of Epiphany'), written in, to quote the author himself, "Slavic vjaz'" – Slavic ligatured script (Платонов 2009а: 465<sup>7</sup>). Other works, like the novellas 'Сокровенный человек' ('The Innermost Man, 1926') or 'Город Градов' ('The City of Gradov', 1926), are clearly forerunners of Platonov's later mature style. (Cf. also Лангепак 1995: 96, 160-163).

After his return to Moscow in 1927 Platonov tried to become a professional writer and even a script writer for Sovkino (Платонов 2009б: 481-482). In the years to follow Platonov would write the most 'Platonovian' works of his whole oeuvre, the most important of which in a very specific, non-normative language – the "great platonovian style" ("большой платоновский стиль"), as E.A. Jablovskiy called it (Яблоков 2009: 253). The poetic language used in Platonov's mature works, written between the end of the 1920s and the mid-1930s, substantially differs from what we can see in the author's earlier works. The latter do not boast the linguistic peculiarities which are so typical for his ripier works. Yet one can see that, already in his early years as a writer, Platonov was interested in linguistic experimentation. See, for example, the broad spectrum of experiments with form and style, especially the (pseudo-)skaz experiments in the stories 'Поп' ('The Priest', 1920), 'Володькин муж' ('Volod'kin the Man', 1921), 'Тютень, Витютень и Протегален' ('Tjutjen', Vitjutjen' and Protegalen', 1922); the stylization of 18<sup>th</sup>-century language use in 'Эпифанские шлюзы'

(‘The Sluices of Epiphany’, 1926); and the bookish or even pedantic language in the novella ‘Эфирный тракт’ (‘Ethereal Highway’, 1926). (Cf., among others, Seifrid 1984: 54-148; Seifrid 1988; Seifrid 1992: 47, 82-85; Сейфрид 1993: 146-153; Лангерак 1995: 61-72; Вьюгин 2000: 7-13; Hodel 2001: 15-90; Яблоков 2009: 254).

Nonetheless, to contend that Platonov’s ‘ripe’ language is the logical and expected continuation of an evolution which started already in the writer’s early works is going too far. The qualitative and quantitative discrepancies between the earlier experiments and the ‘mature’ works are all too obvious. Of course, Platonov’s ‘ripe’ language did not come into being out of nothing. The writer’s early works do carry the seeds of the writer’s later peculiar style, but it remains unclear what the catalyst was – if there was any – that made these seeds germinate and grow into the ‘ripe’ poetic language. This brings us to the central question of this paper: What made Platonov decide to use this radically innovative language from the late 1920s until the mid-1930s?

Platonov’s legacy does not provide us with a concrete, non-literary lead. As E.A. Jablovkov argues, Platonov – notwithstanding his very distinctive writing style and, witness the numerous publicistic texts he wrote, the fact that he was used to expressing his opinion, in public, on the most diverse topics – was not “an aesthetic dissident” (Яблоков 2009: 251; cf. also Лангерак 1995: 29): Platonov wrote nearly nothing about his own aesthetic and artistic principles (not even in his notebooks), nor did he write any manifestos or other explicit artistic-programmatic texts. The few things he wrote on art, literature and aesthetics in the 1920s may seem vague or abstract. See, for example, the articles ‘Культура пролетариата’ (‘The Culture of the Proletariat’, 1920), ‘Пролетарская поэзия’ (‘Proletarian Poetry’, 1922), and the later ‘Фабрика литературы’ (‘The Literature Factory’, 1926). Moreover, until the second half of the 1930s – when Platonov started to write several critical articles, which would appear in *Литературный критик* (*The Literary Critic*), *Литературное обозрение* (*Literary Review*) and other journals and which he later tried to publish as a collection of critical articles (*Размышления читателя – Reflections of a Reader*) (Шубин 1970: 5-6) – the writer almost never publicly expressed his opinion on or attitude towards other – contemporary and non-contemporary – writers, tendencies or styles. (Cf. also Яблоков 2009: 251) As a consequence, there are not really any extra-literary leads which may elucidate Platonov’s choice of such a distinctive writing style. (It has to be said, though, that none of the notebooks of the period 1922-1928 have been saved. (cf. Платонов 2000b) There is a possibility that some of Platonov’s views on poetic language did find expression in these lost notebooks.)

The most obvious lead to follow in order to unravel the enigma of Platonov’s peculiar style is, of course, the semantics of Platonov’s poetic language. It is thus possible to deduce several possible motivations for Platonov’s poetic practice by connecting the form with the semantics of the prose writer’s works. First of all, it is not unlikely that Platonov’s unusual language use serves as a means to slow down the reader, to let him ‘stumble’ over the words used by the writer (what can be qualified as a type of *ostranenie*). (Cf., among others, Толстая-Сегал 1979: 232; Шимонюк 1997: 9-10; Михеев 1998: 21, 33; Вьюгин 2004: 59) It is evident, however, that the formal deviations not only cause the reader to ‘stumble’. They also make him think about the used words and expressions themselves and about their possible meaning(s). When reading Platonov, the native speaker reader may, as has been shown by M.Ju. Micheev, try to guess what the author might have had in mind. He may look for alternative expressions or word combinations that may be used in that specific situation and which he, relying on his linguistic flair and linguistic knowledge, considers to be ‘normal’ or even ‘normative’. One or more alternative expressions will turn up, the semantics of all these alternative expressions will accumulate and, as such, steer the reader’s interpretation. (Михеев 2003: 304-313) Eventually, the initial stumbling and the consequent

search for a meaning based on the linguistic microcontext (i.e. the extra-textual interpretation level, based on the linguistic norm) will turn into an interpretation based on the immediate literary context – other expressions or word combinations in the same sentence, the sentence itself, a paragraph, etc.

However, when talking about the semantics of Platonov's language or on his motivations to apply this very peculiar writing style, one should not forget that three or four 'macro-interpretations' are possible, too. These macro-interpretations do not take into account separate deformations, their microcontexts or immediate literary contexts, but Platonov's poetic language as a whole.<sup>8</sup> The first interpretation of this kind is a meta-linguistic one. This interpretation equates the meaning of Platonov's language with the very mechanism of the writer's poetic language. Platonov violates the reader's (normative) linguistic expectations, linguistic automatisms and, in that way, brings about a deautomatization of language as such. By deforming language, Platonov unmasks the automaticity of language and the 'devaluation' of language that goes hand in hand with it. (Cf., among others Markstein 1978: 119-123, 135; Tsvetkov 1983: 59-88) The second possible macro-interpretation focuses on the socio-political semantics of the writer's language. In this view Platonov's language use is a reflection of the writer's political views, more specifically of his supposedly anti-communist views and his antipathy for the ideological language of the new political system. (Cf., among others, Купина 1999: 162-171; Добренко 2009)<sup>9</sup> The third macro-interpretation considers Platonov's poetic language to be the ultimate means for expressing the writer's philosophical (ontological) and / or mythopoetic understanding of the world. (Cf., among others, Seifrid 1992; Радбиль 1998a; Радбиль 1998b). In a recent article E.A. Jablovkov – as did Joseph Brodsky earlier, but not in relation to Platonov's whole written oeuvre (Brodsky 1985; Бродский 1994) – links the stylistic dominant of Platonov's mature oeuvre with the writer's general philosophical conception of the world as expressed in his notes, letters, publicistic texts, articles and literary works. According to Jablovkov, towards the mid-1920s Platonov started to realize he could popularize his (philosophic) ideas only through literature, and not (any more) through publicistic, philosophic or scientific texts. (Яблоков 2009: 252-253, 254) Generally speaking, Platonov's view on the world is marked by a permanent conflict of opposites (Idem: 254): man tries to fight with and reorganize reality, nature, the Cosmos, but at the same time attempts to become a part of these, to merge with them or even into them (Idem: 254-256, 262); man is not able to express reality and truth in language and, at the same time, is not able to understand the truth / reality or to acquire a complete knowledge of the surrounding world (Idem: 253, 257-258); man is challenged by the conflict between statics and dynamics, between form / formedness and process / formlessness, between space and time, between "incomplete(d)ness" ("незавершенность") and "complete(d)ness" ("целостность"). (Idem: 260-262) This permanent conflict, Jablovkov argues, "crystallizes" in Platonov's peculiar language use, in his "fight with the mortified form" ("борьба с омертвевшей формой"). By using language in an incorrect way, Platonov forces the language elements, which are only petrified forms of the ideas they attempt to express, to tend towards "self-neutralization" ("самопреодоление"), "self-negation" ("самоотрицание") and "self-parody" ("автопародийность"). Paradoxically, at the same time, this process reveals the ideas that lie behind the used language, thus enabling an "unprecedented", deep understanding of reality ("эвристичность"). (Idem: 254, 258, 259-260, 262-263)

All these explanations – micro- and macro-interpretations – are most plausible interpretations of (the meaning of) Platonov's peculiar writing style. However, they do not really clarify the essence of our key question: why did Platonov decide to adopt *this* peculiar writing style. In other words, what made Platonov choose *this* peculiar style to achieve his poetic goals and to express his views and thoughts? Why did he prefer *this* extremely

innovative way of writing over *other* poetic devices, most of which are far more evident and were already proven to be effective by others in the three first ‘experimental’ decades of the twentieth century (i.e. experiments with sounds, lexis, letters and orthography, figures, conventions of prose and poetry, etc.). Why did Platonov decide to adopt a completely new and extraordinary writing style, going further than many of the poetic innovations of the literary tendencies he was, to some extent at least, a successor of – Symbolism and (pre-Soviet and Soviet) Avant-Garde? By first and foremost deforming syntax, Platonov also radically reforms the levels of lexis, pragmatics and stylistics. As a result Platonov achieves a very radical, albeit silent, overturn that nobody of the early-twentieth century artists who claimed such an overturn ever reached. Is it possible that something ‘external’ may have influenced – consciously or unconsciously, to a greater or lesser extent<sup>10</sup> – Platonov in his decision to express his ‘internal’ voice – his thoughts, his artistic, political, and philosophic ideas and conceptions – in this specific way, after the 1924-1926 period of silence?<sup>11</sup>

#### *Four reviews in Oktjabr’ mysli: sympathizing with LEF*

A path that has not been trod yet in the search for Platonov’s possible motives to adopt the ‘Platonovian’ style concerns the moment the writer radically changed his poetic language use, i.e. after the aforementioned two-year silence of 1924-1926 which turned out to be crucial for Platonov’s further career as a writer. As has been stated already, in the 1920s – the years just after the end of the War Communism, of the New Economic Policy, years which were characterized by vivid discussions about the relationship between life and art, the attitude towards classical literature, new forms of literature, new literary techniques, the role and the function of writers and poets in society (Pereval, RAPP, Proletkul’t, Constructivism, LEF, etc.) – Platonov did not write much about the literary and artistic field. However, a series of reviews written in 1924 forms an exception to this rule. In that series of reviews Platonov expresses – once-only and very explicitly – his views on important contemporary literary movements – the ‘Left Front of the Arts’ or ‘LEF’ (‘Левый фронт искусства’, ‘ЛЕФ’) and the production writers, the fellow travelers from Petrograd, the radical proletarian group ‘October’ (‘Октябрь’), and the ‘Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks’ (‘Российская коммунистическая партия большевиков’). He does that in the literary journal *Октябрь мысли* (*October of thought*), in four critical articles, named after the journals that were connected to these movements: ‘ЛЕФ’ (‘LEF’), ‘Звезда’ (‘Star’), ‘На посту’ (‘At Post’) (all in *Октябрь мысли*, No. 1, p. 93-96) and ‘У станка’ (‘At the bench’) (in No. 2, p. 74) respectively. (Платонов 2004б: 259-269)

Despite the fact that he does not really reveal his own aesthetic preferences in this series of reviews, Platonov definitely implies being an advocate of the artistic principles of the Marxist-futurist *lefovcy* – notwithstanding the heterogeneity and the loose character of this group (cf. also Мазаев 1975: 178-188; Stephan 1995: 30, 48-51), – and not of those of the other groups. (cf. also Лангерак 1995: 39; Яблоков 2009: 251) In the review on the journal *LEF* Platonov rather extensively discusses N.F. Čužak’s theory of “life-building” art (“жизнестроение”) or “production art” (“производственное искусство”) (Чужак 1923а). The writer tends to agree with Čužak’s idea that art can organize society, since it can organize emotions, too, adding: “[...] it is not my task to prove the correctness of comrade Čužak’s thesis. He does that sufficiently convincingly himself.”<sup>12</sup> (Платонов 2004: 260)

Platonov is also rather positive about the other theoretical articles in the journal. He calls B.I. Arvatov’s article ‘Маркс о художественной реставрации’ – ‘Marx on artistic restoration’ (Арватов 1923б) – which makes out a case against the idea (favored by, among others, L.D. Trockij<sup>13</sup>) that in order to create a new, future proletarian art, one cannot simply

create completely new, future art forms (“innovation” – “новаторство”), but one has to use and learn from old art forms first (“restoration” – “ревставація”) – “extremely necessary” (“чрезвычайно нужная статья”). (Платонов 2004: 260) About S.M. Tret’jakov’s article ‘Трибуна Лефа’ – ‘The Tribune of Lef’ (Третьяков 1923), which mainly focuses on the linguistic experiments of the Futurists, Platonov says it “efficiently” refutes all the accusations aimed at LEF. (Платонов 2004: 260) Platonov also mentions N. Gorlov’s (Горлов 1923) critical answers to L.S. Sosnovskij<sup>14</sup>, who criticizes LEF’s attitude towards linguistic experimentation in general and V.V. Kamenskij’s *zaum*’ in the sound poem ‘Жонглёр’ (‘The Juggler’, 1923), in particular. (Платонов 2004: 260) About Dziga Vertov’s article on “life-building art” and cinematography Platonov writes it is a straight “transference” (“перенесение”) of LEF’s central thesis. (Idem: 260-261) The only negative thing Platonov writes about the journal has to do with V.B. Šklovskij’s article ‘Техника романа тайн’ – ‘The Technique of the Mystery Novel’ in the fourth issue of *LEF*. Platonov is convinced that this article has nothing to do with ‘production art’ and does not fit in the general program of LEF. (Idem: 260)

In the fellow travelers’ journal *Звезда*, Platonov does not see anything positive. It is far from Marxist and the prose and poetry printed in it is clearly reactionary and non-proletarian in themes and style. (Idem: 261-265) About *Ha nosmy* Platonov writes it is truly proletarian, but very aggressive, not only towards opponents of the proletariat (Pil’njak, Chodasevič, the writers being published in A. Voronskij’s journal *Круг* (*Circle*)), but also, erroneously, towards the proletarian and / or Marxist groups ‘Кузница’ (‘The Smithy’) and LEF. (Idem: 265-168)<sup>15</sup> Platonov agrees that LEF can be criticized, but not for the reasons *Ha nosmy* does. On the critique on the *zaum*’ word creation experiments by V.V. Kamenskij Platonov writes: “There is no reason to blather on about ‘zgara-amba’<sup>16</sup>. That is only an object to scoff at.”<sup>17</sup> (Idem: 266) He also adds the following:

“There are more serious things (than the *zaum*’ poetry – BD) – they were discussed in *Lef* itself. We can only advise you to read the article by comrade Čužak in the second issue of *Lef* more attentively. There you will find directions – *what* and *how* to criticize in *Lef*.”

“Есть вещи посерьезнее – о них говорилось в самом “Лефе”. Мы только можем посоветовать вам повнимательней прочитать статью тов. Чужака во втором номере “Лефа”. Там вы найдете указания – *что и как* нужно критиковать в Лефе.” (Idem: 266)

The fourth and last review, on *У станка*, differs significantly from the other three: it is written in a quiet, serene or even indifferent tone, which highly contrasts with the bold, daring and even provocative style of the first three reviews. (Cf. also Капельницкая & Яблоков 2004: 438) Platonov superficially discusses the sections in the journal, and approves most in it.

Platonov’s preference for LEF’s artistic views, in particular of Čužak’s “life-building” theory, should not be surprising. For Platonov “production art” – the combination of art and production, whereby art does not limit itself to artistic reflection but influences society – was not a mere theory or abstraction. On the contrary, Platonov, until then having been active both as a writer and an engineer, in person experienced the gap between “art” (an individual’s creation, not having any direct influence on society) and “production” (concrete realizations, changing the life and fate of society’s citizens) which LEF’s theorists wanted to undo with “production art”. Moreover, this chasm between “useful” and “useless” activities (real deeds versus literary production) was the essence of Platonov’s personal dilemma, causing the

writer's "silence" between 1924 and 1926. (Лангерак 1995: 41, 112; Капельницкая & Яблоков 2004: 437-438; cf. also Сейфрид 1993: 147)

Platonov scholars agree that in many of Platonov's works written between 1925 and 1927, one can see the writer's interest in LEF's ideas. Th. Langerak names 'Песчаная учительница' ('Teacher of the Sands', 1926), 'Луговые мастера' ('Masters of the Meadow', 1926-1927), 'О потухшей лампе Ильича' ('The Extinguished Lamp of Ilyich', 1926), the unfinished 'Однажды любившие' ('Those who loved once', 1927) and, of course, the montage novella 'Антисексус' ('Antisexus, 1925-1926). (Лангерак 1995: 96-134, 140-141) T. Seifrid writes that 'Песчаная учительница' and 'О потухшей лампе Ильича' clearly deal with issues of "life-building". (Сейфрид 1993: 147-148) N.M. Malygina states that 'Сатана мысли' ('A Satan of Thought', 1921), 'Потомки солнца' ('Descendants of the Sun', 1922), 'Рассказ о многих интересных вещах' ('A Story about Many Interesting Things', 1923), 'О потухшей лампе Ильича', 'Луговые мастера', and 'Лунная бомба' ('The Lunar Bomb', 1926) were written according to the principles of "production art". (Малыгина 2005: 43)

However, as becomes clear from the review, Platonov's concurrence with LEF's artistic views is not limited to possible solutions for the writer's discontent with the function of the writer in society and of the products of his pen that are offered in Čužak's "life-building" theory. Also – and this has been ignored until today – LEF's attitude towards innovation in art in general and linguistic innovation in literature, in particular, triggered Platonov's attention and even his approval. This should not be surprising since he, himself, actually wished to find new forms at that time. Platonov even expressed that wish during his 1925 encounter with *lefovec* and formalist V.B. Šklovskij. According to Šklovskij's rendition of this encounter in his novel *Третья фабрика* (*Third Factory*, 1926) Platonov said the following when both writers talked about literature in general and about V.V. Rozanov, in particular: "one should not describe sunsets or write stories"<sup>18</sup>. (Шкловский 1994: 170) As Langerak notes, these lines can be understood as if Platonov wanted to write plotless montage prose in the style of Rozanov – as did Šklovskij himself regularly at the time. (Лангерак 1995: 96)

It seems safe to interpret Platonov's utterance more broadly, too, i.e. to assume that the writer was not only susceptible to experiments suggested by the immediate context of the utterance – Rozanov, experiments with plot – but also with other levels of literary creation – like 'production art' or even linguistic innovation. It is precisely the need for new forms of art and literature – thus, not just "describing sunsets" or "telling stories", as does traditional art – that is discussed in the theoretical articles in *LEF* Platonov mentions in his review on the literary journal. B.I. Arvatov's article ties in with one of the main cultural issues in the NEP period, i.e. the discussion between the advocates of a proletarian culture founded on the classics – focusing on 'bourgeois' forms of art and considering art to be a means of cognizing society and life – and those of a totally new proletarian art – focusing on new forms of art and considering art to be a means of building, organizing society and life. Arvatov attempts to prove that when following Marx's theoretical writings on the art of the Antiquity and of the French Revolution, one can only conclude that the new art of the proletariat should not consist in a return to the classics – "passeism" or "restoration" – but in a radical break with the classics, in innovation. (Арватов 1923б) The articles by N.F. Čužak, N. Gorlov and S.M. Tret'jakov also – implicitly or explicitly – favor "innovation" or "Futurism" over "passeism" or "restoration" (Горлов 1923; Чужак 1923б: 145, 147; Третьяков 1923: 154), but their main focus lies on specific aspects of neo-Futurist (word) art. Čužak's article in the second issue of *LEF* – about which Platonov rightly says it indicates "*what* to criticize in Lef and *how*" – focuses on the Futurists' engagement in producing a new literature and a new language. Čužak praises the Futurists for being the first to have trodden the path of



production art, of truly proletarian art but, at the same time, he criticizes them for only “defining”, and not “solving” the problem of production art. Čužak incites the Futurists – “the hammerers of language” (“молотобойцы языка”) – to start acting. They should give up writing lyrically about individualistic themes as love. The new era, says Čužak, cannot tolerate art as decoration, as an “accompaniment” (“аккомпанемент”) of life, even if it is avant-gardistic in form, especially at a time when the proletarian masses – “the languageless street” (“безъязыкая улица”) – do not have a language of their own. The Futurists should quit discussing all kinds of intellectual issues, from politics over literature to mathematics, in their salons, while those who cannot speak – “the weak factories are babbling” (“вялые косноязычат заводы и фабрики”) – are awaiting the new poetry – “the iron rhymes that have not yet been found” (“ненайденные железные рифмы”). The Futurists should also stop writing declarations on communism and production, almost surpassing the young activists of the ‘October’ group in their aggressiveness, especially at a time when the press is suffering from empty clichés. New agitation art *an sich* is useless, writes Čužak. Instead, new models and examples have to be built. The Futurists should get involved in the production process and start producing a new language, without repeating themselves, moving away from well-trodden paths. (Чужак 1923б: 147-152)

Gorlov refutes some of the criticism on the (neo-)Futurists. He stresses that the much-criticized shock elements in the Futurist performances are only a minor aspect of Futurist art; that Futurist art can only be understood when studied like mathematics or politics; and that the sound experiments are only nonsensical outside of their poetic context. (Горлов 1923: 18-19) Gorlov also adds that Futurist word art is a victory over “matter” and over “inert form”: constantly using the same words and forms turns them into clichés and makes them “empty”, and it is this aspect of culture and language that Futurism fights with. (Idem: 19-21) Tret’jakov’s article also tries to counter the widespread criticism on the (neo-)Futurists. Tret’jakov deals with many issues<sup>19</sup>, some of which Gorlov also touches upon, but the main emphasis lays on the Futurists’ word art. The theorist stresses that the Futurist experimentation with language, rhyme, rhythm and sound – especially in the *zaum*’ “laboratory of sounds”, studying the sound possibilities of language – greatly influenced Soviet propaganda and new proletarian poets and writers. Besides, claims Tret’jakov, Futurist word art laid the foundations for linguistics, which later would reveal the first steps on the way to “conscious language building” (“сознательная стройка языка”). (Третьяков 1923: 156, 161) Nonetheless, Tret’jakov admits, the ultimate aim of the Futurists (for which he refers to G.O. Vinokur’s programmatic articles in *LEF* that will be discussed further down in this paper) – to use elements of Futurist language (poetic speech, aimed at expression, at influencing the consciousness and emotions of the public) in everyday language (speech aimed at communication, at transferring information) – will not be reached soon: the elements of Futurist poetic speech will have to be introduced into everyday language step by step so that, eventually, the discrepancy between “poetic” and “everyday” (“prosaic”) language will disappear, so that the masses can become full “masters” (“мастера”) of their own language. (Третьяков 1923: 162-164)

The fact that Platonov speaks positively about articles dealing with formal innovation, linguistic experimentation, and linguistic innovation in everyday language is as important as the fact that he was acquainted with Čužak’s theory of “life-building”. It indicates that Platonov may have – consciously or unconsciously – revised his views on literary conventions and language use in literature and/or adjusted his own poetic practice accordingly. Besides, Platonov’s interest in the literary movements and literary debates of the time went further than *LEF* alone. As N.V. Kornienko points out, from 1924 on, Platonov showed interest in Formalist thought too. Platonov’s relationship towards the Formalists, however, was a dual one: he agreed with many of their ideas but, at the same time, he

disagreed on important theoretical issues, such as the history of Russian literature or universal formulas for the creation of literature.<sup>20</sup> (Корниенко 1991; Корниенко 2009: 387) A good example of this dual attitude is the writer's unfinished novella 'Однажды любившие'. It is not difficult to see in this experiment resemblances to the formalist conception of literature and 'new LEF's' "литература факта" – "literature of fact".<sup>21</sup>

Another example is the article 'Фабрика литературы', where Platonov – ironically (cf. Корниенко 1991; 2009: 387) or seriously (Лангерак 1995: 86, 141) – proposes to "produce" literature in an industrial way, like in a "commodity distribution network" ("товаропроводящая сеть"). The writer should not work directly with "the raw material" ("сырьё") – words, – but with "semi-finished products" ("полуфабрикаты"), delivered to him by society. "Now it is necessary," claims Platonov, "to write not with words, fabricating and copying the living language, but directly with parts of that living language [...], assembling these pieces into a work of art."<sup>22</sup> (Платонов 1991: 197) Platonov takes his own 'Антисексус' as an example of this *modus operandi* of montage – the novel was written on the basis of his own notebooks, where he collects fragments of newspapers and books, dialogues he heard, his own thoughts, etc. Ideally, "literary correspondents" ("литкоры") – the "factory-hands" ("мастеровые") – gather all kinds of materials (stories, facts, events, etc.) and transfer them to the "regional" or "national literary correspondents" ("нацлиткоры", "обллиткоры") – the "section craftsmen" ("цеховые мастера"), – who sort the raw materials. At the end of this production line is the writer, the "master craftsman" ("мастер") or the "fitter" ("монтёр"), who processes the materials. The whole assembly process is directed by the "engineers" ("инженеры") – the literary critics, who work in the "assembly shop" ("сборочный цех") together with the writers. (Платонов 1991: 199)

It is important to stress that the writer's sympathy for LEF and the Formalists can, in no way, be understood as if Platonov just accepted these theories and put them into practice in his own works. As wrote Th. Langerak, Platonov's talent was rather "spontaneous" or "uncontrolled" ("стихийный"). (Лангерак 1995: 87) Platonov cannot be considered a follower of LEF, Formalism, or any other literary movement or program, but artistic theories and programs may have attracted his attention and / or may have served to spur his own thoughts and literary practice.

### *Platonov, Vinokur and poetics*

It is assumed that, over time, Platonov's interest in the LEF-project – at least in one aspect of it, i.e. "life-building" art – ceased to manifest itself in the same explicit way in his works. (Лангерак 1995: 141; cf. also Капельницкая & Яблоков 2004: 438) It is not impossible, though, that the second aspect of the LEF project – the wish to experiment with poetic language, to innovate or even reinvent everyday language – played a role, nonetheless, in the further development of Platonov's artistic voice. The programmatic linguistic project of Grigorij Osipovič Vinokur, which was published in *LEF*, may be a possible explanation for the writer's switch to a highly non-normative and innovative poetic language in 1926-1927. It is possible that Vinokur's highly original and innovative programmatic texts and ideas<sup>23</sup> – which define and elaborate issues that are only hinted at obliquely or touched upon indirectly in other authoritative theoretical articles in *LEF* (by Čužak and Arvatov) and which, in later issues of the journal, are adopted by other LEF-theorists (like Gorlov and Tret'jakov) – to a greater or lesser degree may have influenced Platonov's own conception of poetic language and his choice of the radical linguistic innovation we can see in his mature works. As will be illustrated further down in the text, there are clear convergences – both theoretical and practical – between Vinokur's linguistic project and Platonov's conception of (literary)

language. Besides that, all the circumstances – the time frame and the writer's attitude towards (articles on) linguistic experimentation – seem to be particularly favorable for the assumption that Vinokur's programmatic texts may have been picked up by Platonov, and later – already digested, assimilated, and essentially altered – applied to his own poetic system.

Of course, it is impossible to prove the assumption that Vinokur's programmatic texts definitely influenced Platonov, but nor is that the aim of this paper. There is a slight chance, however, that Platonov's personal archive – letters, manuscripts, documents, notes, books and journals, – which is not fully described yet, might clear up the relationship between Platonov and Vinokur and might even allow us to determine whether Platonov's drastic change in poetic language is a question of influence (i.e. a proper, distinctive assimilation and utilization of the linguist's concepts by the prose writer), a question of coincidence, or even – which is most probable – a question of multiple factors (Platonov's own conception, direct influences, indirect influences and even the *Zeitgeist*). For now, however, the only materials that can be used are those that are published already, but they do not contain anything pointing in the direction of Vinokur's linguistic project.

In the early 1920s Vinokur – author of the now well-known *Majakovskij – novator jazyka – Mayakovsky, an Innovator in Language* (1943) and of many works on the history of the Russian language, lexicology, language culture and the linguistic analysis of literary texts – was affiliated to the Moscow Linguistic Circle and to LEF. In 1923, besides several reviews and review articles, the young Vinokur also published four linguistic articles in the journal *LEF*: 'Футуристы – строители языка' – 'The Futurists – Constructors of Language' (vol. 1, 1923), 'О революционной фразеологии' – 'On Revolutionary Phraseology' (vol. 2, 1923), 'Поэтика. Лингвистика. Социология' – 'Poetics. Linguistics. Sociology' (vol. 3, 1923), and 'О пуризме' – 'On Purism' (vol. 4, 1923).

Platonov not only read (some of) Vinokur's articles in *LEF*, or at least was familiar with their contents, he even speaks very favorably of them. In his review of *LEF* Platonov writes:

“(The articles – BD) [b]y comrade Vinokur, on language; much has been written and said about them recently. To us it seems that they seriously raise the question about the necessity of a new class approach to language and that they deserve all our attention.” (Платонов 2004б: 260-261)

“(Статьи – BD) [т]ов. Винокура – о языке; о них уже очень много писалось и говорилось за последнее время. Нам они кажутся серьезно ставящими вопрос о необходимости нового классового подхода к языку и безусловно заслуживающими всякого внимания.”

At first glance, Platonov's explicit approval is remarkable, because Vinokur's articles deal with issues that, on first inspection, seem quite far removed from the writer's artistic interests. However, as we have seen already, the theoretical articles in *LEF* Platonov speaks positively about – by Čužak, Gorlov, and Tret'jakov – also deal with aspects similar to the ones in Vinokur's articles. (Tret'jakov even explicitly refers to Vinokur's articles in the first two volumes of *LEF*, as does Arvatov in an article Platonov does not refer to in his review, i.e. 'Речетворчество (По поводу 'заумной поэзии')' – 'Speech creation (About 'Transrational Poetry' (Арватов 1923а).) Linguistic innovation in literature and society, so it seems, had great appeal for Platonov.

Besides, already before 1924, Platonov was showing an interest in issues in linguistics and / or poetic aesthetics. In his 1921 article ‘Пролетарская поэзия’ – ‘Proletarian Poetry’<sup>24</sup>, for example, Platonov makes the following statement on the nature of word:

*“The word has to be considered to be a three-edged symbol of reality.*

*The word consists of three elements: idea, form and sound. This triangle can portray any thing from the real world. There is no word without the simultaneous merging of these three elements – they only are present in different percentual combinations: sometimes the idea overpowers, sometimes – sound, sometimes – form. But these three elements are always present together. The word is unthinkable without them.”* (Платонов 2004б: 164-165, italics in the original – BD)

*“Слово надо считать трехгранным символом действительности.*

*У него есть три элемента: идея, образ и звук. Такой треугольник и рисует нам какую-нибудь вещь из действительности. Нет слова без одновременного слияния этих трех элементов – они только бывают в разных процентных сочетаниях: иногда пересиливает идея, иногда звучность, иногда образ. Но всегда три элемента бывают вместе. Слово невысказимо без них”.*

As E.A. Jablovskij argued, Platonov’s utterance proves that he was interested in the philological and aesthetic theories of word by A. Potebnja, P. Florenskij, A. Belyj, V. Chlebnikov, Vjač. Ivanov, N. Kljuev, and V. Šklovskij. The very idea that the word is a “three-edged symbol of reality”, in Jablovskij’s opinion, goes back to Florenskij. (Яблоков 2004: 372)<sup>25</sup> N.M. Malygina, however, links this utterance with A. Potebnja’s differentiation between “internal” and “external form” (“внутренняя – внешняя форма”). (Малыгина 2005: 39-40)

At the same time some of Platonov’s early articles give evidence of the writer being acquainted with philosophical conceptions of art, literature and language by, for example, F. Nietzsche, H. Bergson and, most important, O. Spengler. (Яблоков 2009: 259-261; Корниенко 2004: 399)<sup>26</sup> In his 1922, but unpublished article ‘Симфония сознания (Этюды о духовной культуре современной Западной Европы)’ – ‘Symphony of Thought (Studies on the Spiritual Culture of Current Western Europe)’, for example, Platonov connects the Spenglerian idea of an organic history – i.e. history not as a linear progression, but as a flowering of different cultures – with his own philosophic conception of the world and even of (literary) language. According to Platonov, nature is a shadow, a reflection, a petrified image of the living, moving, evolving history / life. (Платонов 2004: 224-225) The same opposition – the petrified image of something real – also concerns the relationship between art and reality: the former, writes Platonov, is a “transformation” of the latter, a “transformation of chaos, its limitation” (“трансформация хаоса, его ограничение”) since only “form” (“форма”), being “limited” (“ограниченное”), can be understood by man. The artist, says Platonov, transforms reality into form, thus making it comprehensible for man. (Idem: 221-222)

### *“Linguists-technicians” and “poets-engineers”: Vinokur’s New Class Approach*

The preceding sections show that Platonov theoretically may have been susceptible to the ideas in Vinokur’s linguistic articles. But what about the practical convergences? Are there any similarities between Platonov’s poetic language and Vinokur’s linguistic project? To answer that question, a closer look at Vinokur’s ideas is needed.

The “new class approach” which Platonov mentions in his review is the central topic in the linguist’s articles ‘Футуристы – строители языка’ and ‘О революционной фразеологии’.<sup>27</sup> Both articles not only *describe* linguistic phenomena, but also provide an ideologically motivated social, cultural-linguistic program of how to handle language and, as such, *prescribe* linguistic behavior. In some fragments, prescription even gains the upper hand on description. Both articles constitute a logical whole since they share the same basic assumptions and goals: the role of cultural agents is to raise the language level of the proletarian masses in order to consolidate the new political system.<sup>28</sup> Nowhere does Vinokur use the expression Platonov mentions in his review – “a new class approach to language”. Nonetheless, the writer’s definition fully covers the linguist’s ideologically motivated project: in the 1920s the need for a ‘new’ policy with regard to the language level of the illiterate / newly literate masses and of the proletarian writers and journalists is a burning topic of discussion (Cf. Третьяков 1923: 164; Чужак 1923б: 148-149; Винокур 1924; Stephan 1995: 77; Gorham 2003).<sup>29</sup>

A key role in Vinokur’s project is given to the “language culture” concept – the language level, which “[...] corresponds with the general cultural level of a given social milieu”<sup>30</sup>. (Винокур 1923а: 204) Vinokur claims that literature can influence the “language culture” of the masses. After all, in everyday life language is impulsive, automatic and inert while a conscious use of language – i.e. a deliberate and well-considered treatment of “the organizing moments of language in their system”<sup>31</sup>, e.g. while writing a letter or creating literature – may surmount that inertia. (Ibidem) The basis for that presumption lies in Vinokur’s belief that man can “[...] not only *learn* a language, but also *make* language, not only *organize* the elements of language, but also *invent* new connections between those elements”<sup>32</sup>. (Idem: 207; emphasis added – BD) So it is possible to raise the “language culture” of a society.<sup>33</sup> However, Vinokur continues,

“[...] invention is the highest level of language culture which we, on a mass scale, can only dream of for now. Invention requires a high level of technique, the broadest mastering of language elements and constructions, a mass penetration into the language system, the ability to make good use in an unrestrained way of the levers and springs that form the language mechanism. For such a broad culture we do not have even the basic technical, let alone the social, prerequisites here in Russia; the vast majority of the Russian people are plainly and simply illiterate. Yes, a mass scale is clearly not possible here.” (Idem: 207-208)

“[...] изобретение – это высшая степень культуры языка, о которой, в массовом масштабе, мы можем пока только мечтать. Изобретение предполагает высокую технику, широчайшее усвоение элементов и конструкции языка, массовое проникновение в языковую систему, свободное маневрирование составляющими языковой механизм рычагами и пружинами. У нас в России – для такой широкой культуры нет пока даже основных технических – не говорю социальных – предпосылок; громадное большинство русского народа просто напросто безграмотно. Да, массовый масштаб тут явно невозможен”.

Vinokur assigns a key task in this invention process to men of letters, on the one hand, and linguists, on the other. Literary men are, then, “engineers”, processing the linguistic raw materials, and linguists – “technologists”, guiding and directing the whole process, setting targets and deciding how to transform language in accordance with social and ideological needs. (Винокур 1923а: 213; 1923б: 117, 118)<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that Vinokur mentions only poets, but one can assume that prose writers, especially when they have an exceptional

feeling for language – the building material of prose and poetry, – are eligible, too; cf. for example the statement by V.V. Majakovskij and O.M. Brik that there should be no differences between spoken language, poetic language and prose language. (Маяковский & Брик 1923: 40) Besides, some of Vinokur's illustrations and examples are not taken from poetry, but from everyday language.

Vinokur presents his conception in two articles<sup>35</sup>, but in each of them the linguist elaborates it differently: both articles share a common task, but the concrete realizations of that task differ. Already at this stage, however, it is clear that this kind of conception may have been close to Platonov's conception of (poetic) language, or may at least have drawn the writer's attention. As has been mentioned already, formal innovation in art and literature and linguistic innovation in literature and society were of great interest to Platonov. Besides, the ideology of progress, of redesigning and reorganizing the world, of implementing (genuine) communism, of utilitarianism, which can be heard in Vinokur's theory, was not extraneous to Platonov – cf. his publicistic writings, his amelioration works, and his consent with LEF theories ("life-building", "production art", linguistic 'amelioration' in society) which all, to a greater or lesser degree, reflect the writer's belief in the communist project and in the organizing power of art and literature. Art as a means of organizing society and life (and not just of depicting or cognizing society and life), and artists as active participants in the modernization of the new state were, of course, central topics in many left artistic movements in the 1920s. Think of A.A. Bogdanov's *tectology* (*тектология*), Proletkul't, LEF (esp. Čužak), Constructivism, etc. (Cf. Мазаев 1975; Stephan 1995: 59-64)

Furthermore, the metaphor of engineering, inventing and building and the metaphor of language as a mechanism (*изобретение, техника / технологи, инженерия / инженеры, конструкция языка, языковая система, составляющие языковой механизм рычаги и пружины, языковое сырьё* etc.) used by Vinokur to set forth his linguistic project may well have attracted the attention of Platonov-the-engineer, Platonov-the-inventor.<sup>36</sup> Similar images can be seen in the other LEF-articles on Futurist word art, too. Cf. Čužak's "hammerers of language" ("молотобойцы языка") (Чужак 1923б: 148). It should be noted that *literature as production* and *literature as a craftsmanship* were the pet topic of LEF and Čužak (1923a: 13), the Formalists (cf. the production metaphor in Platonov's reaction to Formalism in 'Фабрика литературы'), and other contemporaries of Platonov, such as the Smithies (Кузнец) or even the Imaginists (Имажинисты). (Cf. Мазаев 1975; Яблоков 2004: 369; Stephan 1995: 90ff) Also it is not difficult to see the link with the Cubo-Futurists' and lefovcy's "verbal laboratory" (cf. also Маяковский & Брик 1923), with B.I. Arvatov's "linguistic technology" ("лингво-техника") (Арватов 1923а: 90-91) or with the Constructivists' "art technology" ("технология искусства"). However, Vinokur's conception is unique in its aims, in the rigid allocation of tasks between "linguists-technicians" and "poets-engineers" and, most importantly, in the metaphor of language itself as a mechanism.

Besides these three rather superficial similarities with Vinokur's project, which can also be seen as by-products of the *Zeitgeist* of the Soviet 1920s, there are other convergences. An alternative to Vinokur's division of roles between linguists – those who show the path – and writers – those who follow the linguists' instructions – can be seen in Platonov's 'Фабрика литературы' (1926), where the writer claims that it is the writer's task to write, and the literary critic's task "to invent new methods for their composition"<sup>37</sup>: "[t]he critic has to become a builder of 'machines', which produce literature, and with these very machines the artist will labor and produce."<sup>38</sup> (Платонов 1991: 197) The Vinokurian division of "science" and "poets" ("art") in the context of raising the language culture reminds one also of Platonov's early notion on the role of science and art in realizing "the culture of the proletariat", which he expressed in his article 'Пролетарская поэзия'. Platonov considers

that in their “supreme conditions” (“высшие состояния”) – i.e. in their ideal forms – science and art “are one” (“они [...] есть одно”) because they serve the same goals. Art, says Platonov, wants to release the world from its laws and to transform, to recreate the world into a desired world. In other words, art aims to create a perfect organization of the world out of chaos. Science, then, has the potential to get to know what the world is like, and what it should be like. Ideally then, science and art are complementary, they “converge in one point” (“совпадают в одной точке”) or even equal each other. (Платонов 2004б: 163-164)

How is that “recreation” of the world and of nature accomplished in literature? According to Platonov, ideally the “recreation” has to start with “matter” (“материя”), i.e. not with the “conventional symbols” (“условные символы”), “images” (“образы”) or “echoes” (“эхо”) of the wordly things man has in him. However, in reality, Platonov writes, the recreation of the world based on “matter”, on reality itself is not yet possible: man is not capable of that yet. For that reason man has to start the transformation of the world with “intangible things” (“нематериальные вещи”), with “images” and “symbols” of matter or things, with words, hence with literature – the art of language. (Idem: 164-165) This type of recreation Platonov calls “poetry of the proletarian epoch”.<sup>39</sup> (Idem: 165) The reorganization of “matter itself”, of “reality itself” can be started only later. The first steps to that type of recreation have been taken already, but the results are still preliminary.

Eventually, this type of reorganization of reality, of the world, of the universe will be the future “poetry” of the proletariat – the real “proletarian poetry” (“пролетарская поэзия”). (Idem: 165-166) Consequently, in Platonov’s conception, true future proletarian poetry consists in “[t]he invention of machines (as in ‘В звездной пустыне’, cf. above – BD), the creation of new iron, of working constructions [...]”<sup>40</sup>, and “[e]very new machine is a real proletarian poem”.<sup>41</sup> (Idem: 166-167)

It is important to stress that Platonov not only mentions *poetry* as a way to rebuild the world, but also *prose*<sup>42</sup>: “Every new great work on the change of nature for the sake of man is a proletarian, precise, thrilling prose.” (Idem: 167)<sup>43</sup> So the first success on the way to recreating the world, in Platonov’s opinion, is the electrification of the country:

“Electrification is the first proletarian novel, our great book in an iron binding. Machines are our poems, and the creation of machines is the beginning of a proletarian poetry, which equals a rising of man against the universe for his own sake.” (Idem: 167)

“Электрификация – вот первый пролетарский роман, наша большая книга в железном переплете. Машины – наши стихи, и творчество машин – начало пролетарской поэзии, которая есть восстание человека на вселенную ради самого себя”.

One can observe a clear resemblance with Vinokur’s conception who states that the “ideal” method to “raise the culture” of the Soviet people consists in “linguistic inventing”. The people, however, are not ready for that. The first steps have to be taken by the technologists/technicians-linguists and the engineers-poets. Of course, Vinokur does not speak about a recreation of the world as such. That idea of Platonov, presumably, goes back to the cosmic conception of utopian communism. Nonetheless, Vinokur’s objective is the same as Platonov’s: to achieve the reconstruction of the world in the spirit of communism, to achieve communist progress for the whole people (whether in the form of “raising the language culture” or in the form of reconstructing the world). More important than this similarity, however, is the fact that with his article Platonov shows that he considers the creation of poetry or prose to be a possible first step in the recreation of the world, in the

direction of achieving the communist ideals. In other words, to work as a man of letters is as important for the achievement of communism, as working as an inventor, an engineer. In that way, it is perfectly possible that Platonov apprehended Vinokur's ideas on "language culture".

*A new "language culture": Cubo-Futurist "grammatical engineering"*

What specifically does Vinokur understand under this "language invention" ("языковое изобретение")? In the first article, 'Футуристы – строители языка', Vinokur elaborates his concept in relation to the linguistic experiments of the Cubo-Futurists.<sup>44</sup>

Vinokur's conception of the Cubo-Futurists' linguistic oeuvre combines objective observation and subjective (re)interpretation. On the one hand, Vinokur – considering poetic language to be just another form of normal language (and not a special, separate type of language use, as Jakobson does (Винокур 1923a: 205)) – accurately analyses and describes the linguistic peculiarities of Futurist poetry with the then available linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, however, the LEF-linguist does not interpret the linguistic peculiarities of Futurist poetry from the point of view of the pre-Soviet Futurist conceptions of art and (poetic) language, as one would expect. On the contrary, Vinokur imposes his own and LEF's ideologically motivated utilitarian interpretation on the linguistic facts: he comments upon them as a manifestly ideologically motivated linguist and reinterprets them in the light of his own ideological linguistic program – raising the language level of Soviet society – and of the ideological program of (some of) the post-revolutionary Futurists or *lefovcy* – presenting Futurist language experiments as a logical continuation of the language of the masses. In other words, the linguist's rendition of the Futurists' linguistic practice (description) is meant to pursue aims which are not related at all to the Futurist's initial artistic aspirations and which even highly contrast with them.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Vinokur succeeds in reconciling the extreme, intellectualist (Cubo-)Futurist experiments to his ideologically inspired and easily accessible reinterpretation and in creating an acceptable model for linguistic renewal.

Vinokur's first statement on the Cubo-Futurists' linguistic achievements does not have much to do with their linguistic oeuvre as such, but with an interpretation of it that came into being in the 1920s – and which is also clearly present in the *LEF* articles Platonov mentions in his review, – when LEF tried to secure its position in the heavily shaken-up literary field and presented itself and its predecessor – the pre-revolutionary, apolitical, but "bohemian" Cubo-Futurists – as truly proletarian writers. In that interpretation, Cubo-Futurist – or Futurist – art is considered genuinely proletarian: it is based on the language of the masses, it deals with the linguistic problems of the masses, and it aims to provide a new language for the masses (based on Futurist experimentation). (Третьяков 1923: 156; Чужак 1923б: 147-148) Vinokur follows this trend, arguing that the futurists were the first ones to undertake the mission of raising the "language culture", of surmounting the "babble" ("косноязычие") of the masses<sup>46</sup> – i.e., the masses not having command of their own language, but only following their "blind instinct" ("слепой инстинкт") when talking. (Винокур 1923a: 205-207) Not only did the Cubo-Futurists start with "linguistic invention" or did they "show the path of linguistic engineering"<sup>47</sup>, they also "pointed out the problem of the "languageless street" as a simultaneously poetic and social problem"<sup>48</sup>. Consequently, they were the first to start "a mass language building project" ("массовое языковое строительство"). (Idem: 208) In doing that, the Futurists did not confine themselves to the sheer registration of the language of the masses. Instead, they "forged" ("ковать") a new language, since they did not dispose of an elaborated model, despite the fact that, for their linguistic creations, they could draw material from the "mass language, spoken language"



(“массовый, разговорный язык”). (Idem: 207)<sup>49</sup> In that way, claims Vinokur, the Futurists did the same for the Russian language as A.S. Puškin did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in a different way. Where Puškin had *imported* the language of the lower classes – the ‘masses’ – *into* the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian poetic language of G.R. Deržavin and others, the Futurists *created* an entirely new language *for* the masses, basing themselves on the language of the masses. (Idem: 205, 207)

The (supposed) *narodnost*’ of the Futurists’ linguistic oeuvre brings us to the linguist’s central hypothesis. According to Vinokur, “linguistic engineering” for raising the “language culture” of the masses implies a special kind of “language making” (“делание языка”) or “word creation” (“словотворчество”): not “lexical” (“лексикологическое”) but “grammatical” (“грамматическое”) creation, which consists in “inventing new connections between language elements”. Vinokur points out that “genuine linguistic invention” can only be “grammatical”, “[...] since the sum of linguistic skills and impressions, which often is defined as ‘the spirit of language’, is first and foremost created by the linguistic system, i.e. the totality of relations existing between the separate constituents of the complex linguistic mechanism”. (Idem: 208)<sup>50</sup>

The (Cubo-)Futurists’ principles of word creation, continues Vinokur, are, in many ways, cases of “grammatical word creation”. The most prototypical case, according to the linguist, is the innovative use of suffixes based on analogy, which can be found in large numbers in V. Chlebnikov’s work. Vinokur writes that this type of “grammatical word creation” is a “pure” and “brilliant” type but, at the same time, has, in comparison with the other Futurists’ poetic practice, a rather “laboratory” character. (Idem: 208, 209) This type of word creation is, according to Vinokur, best exemplified in Chlebnikov’s ‘Incantation by Laughter’ (‘Заклятие смехом’), where “the formal possibilities of the word “to laugh – laughter” (смеяться – смех) are worked out in detail in an almost exhaustive way.”<sup>51</sup> (Idem: 208) The fact that “ordinary and familiar to everybody suffixes are taken and added to a non-corresponding word”<sup>52</sup> is the essence of Chlebnikov’s word creation, and also is the essence of “grammatical creation”: grammatical creation, says Vinokur, is not achieved through the creation of new language elements, but through the creation of new relations between already existing language elements, for example on the basis of analogy, which leads to – or suggests – new meanings. Vinokur provides a few Chlebnikovian examples of word creation through analogy: Chlebnikov’s *летава* (a flying object, a projectile, a bullet) and *метава* (something flinging (bullets), like a machine-gun) from *Война-смерть* (Death-war, 1913) are based on the normative *дубрава* (oak forest), and *могун* (someone who is able to do something (from the verb *мочь* – to be able)) from *Те-ли-ле* (Te-li-le, 1914) and *владун* (a master, a sovereign, someone who is in control of things) from *Тебе поем, Родун* (Neward, we praise thee, 1908) – on *бегун* (runner). (Idem: 208-209) Similar applications of “grammatical creation” – “[...] its elements have to be fished out of the thicket of the whole material [...]” (Idem: 209)<sup>53</sup> – Vinokur detects in the work of V. Majakovskij, D. Burljuk, and N. Aseev. Majakovskij’s engineering is not as “detailed” or “pure” as Chlebnikov’s, but still “essentially complex and inventive”<sup>54</sup>. (Idem: 209) As an example, Vinokur names *выжиревший* in ‘Облако в штанах’ – ‘A Cloud in Trousers’, the semantics of which is not only triggered by the verb *жиреть* – to grow fat, but also on the basis of the verb *вывернуть* – to turn inside out further in the same text or other verbs with the prefix *вы-*. Vinokur sees another case of “grammatical creation” in Burljuk’s “prepositionless experiments”<sup>55</sup> (Idem: 209). Even the device of “poetic etymology” (“поэтическая этимология”) – a poetic device that does not concern “grammar”, but rather the level of “phonetics” – fits in Vinokur’s understanding of “grammatical creation”, e.g. Aseev’s poem ‘О нем’ – ‘About him’, where the combination of the phonetically close or identical but semantically unrelated words (e.g. *сталелитейный*, on the one hand, and *стали* and

*лететь*, on the other – “Со сталелитейного стали лететь...” evokes the impression that the words used may be semantically related to one another. (Idem: 209-210) These sound experiments – or examples of “sound grammar” (“звуковая грамматика”), – says Vinokur, can be categorized as cases of “grammatical engineering” since not only the sound of the words is played upon, but also their semantics. (Idem: 210)

It is worth asking, whether present-day linguistics would consider Chlebnikov’s and Majakovskij’s neologisms (at least those based on analogy), Burljuk’s disregard of the prepositions, and Aseev’s and Chlebnikov’s poetic etymologies to be cases of “grammatical engineering”. Even from the point of view of modern linguistics, Chlebnikov’s neologisms indeed do not have much to do with lexis alone. On the contrary, they are the results of a play with morphological rules. It is not difficult to categorize morphology or word formation rules as “grammatical”, if under the latter one primarily understands the rules of language that prescribe the relations *between* linguistic elements – in this case not separate words (or lexemes), but parts of words (affixes or other (free, bound, derivational, inflectional) morphemes and word stems or lexemes). The same goes for Majakovskij’s neologisms that Vinokur speaks of. Things are more complicated when it comes to Burljuk’s preference not to use prepositions or to cases of poetic etymology. Burljuk’s experimentation with prepositions seems to be a more superficial kind of “linguistic invention”: at first glance, linguistic elements are not really reorganized or recombined, but omitted. Nonetheless, the description “grammatical engineering” may apply to Burljuk’s experiments too, if one agrees to understand the element “reorganization” more broadly: by omitting prepositions, one is forced to reconsider the relations between nouns or combinations of nouns and adjectives. Aseev’s poetic etymologies can only be considered ‘grammatical’ if one looks back at Vinokur’s initial definition of “grammatical engineering”. Although no new linguistic elements are invented, new relations are made between linguistic elements. By combining phonetically close or identical but semantically unrelated words, new (semantic) ties between the words used come into being. Hence, Burljuk’s and Aseev’s types of word creation can be denominated as “grammatical engineering” – i.e. as Vinokur defines it, – but, despite their eligibility for Vinokur’s term, they are rather atypical or even marginal in comparison to Chlebnikov’s and Majakovskij’s neologisms based on analogy.

In contradistinction to what one would expect, Vinokur does not associate the linguistic experiments that are generally considered to be most typical for the Cubo-Futurists – transrational language – with “linguistic invention”. (Idem: 208, 210) According to the LEF-linguist, transrational language cannot be called ‘language’ as such in view of its “meaninglessness”: “‘Transrational language’, as a language, is devoid of meaning – it does not have a communicative function, which is inherent in language in general.”<sup>56</sup> (Idem: 211-212, cf. also 208) Furthermore, in Vinokur’s opinion, *zaum*’ is “anti-social”. About Kručënych’s poetry the linguist writes that it is “[...] pure psychology, pure individualization, which does not have anything in common with the system of language as a social fact”. (Idem: 211)<sup>57</sup> Vinokur is convinced that the accent has to be not on the individual aspects of language, but on the “cultural-organizing function of language” (“культурно-организующая функция языка”), since “language” is “production” (“слово” есть “производство”). (Idem: 211) Nonetheless, Vinokur contests the assumption that *zaum*’ is totally invaluable to linguistics and society. On the contrary, *zaum*’ experiments can be looked upon as “[...] the results of a preparatory, laboratory work for the creation of a new system of elements of social nomination”<sup>58</sup> (Idem: 212). Transrational language, says Vinokur, can be used for naming films, cigarettes, restaurants, etc., because brand names almost always lose their initial semantics and, as such, can be considered ‘transrational’. In the linguist’s opinion, Kručënych’s *Еуы* can be used as a cigarette brand, just like the existing brand *Канэ* which, in itself, according to Vinokur at least, is an example of “meaningless” *zaum*’. After all, writes

Vinokur, in the case of “social-nominative” work, the lack of meaning is not only an advantage, but even a condition. Furthermore, the development of transrational language can be of service to linguists, too – as a different type of linguistic invention: the experimentation shows linguists which phonetic combinations are acceptable to a poet’s “critical ear” and, consequently, may be applied in other spheres of language. (Idem: 212)<sup>59</sup>

The linguistic mission society has to fulfill does not consist in the imitation of the poetic achievements of Futurism, argues Vinokur: “Our examples [...] are instructive in principle: they reveal a direction linguistic engineering can follow, they show how the principles of the poets’ linguistic work can be interpreted in everyday life.”<sup>60</sup> (Idem: 210) In short, society’s linguistic mission, consisting in a “mass language building project” has to be determined in accordance with the “social-linguistic needs” (“социально-языковые нужды”), “[...] the theoretical registration of which will be made by science, and their solution – by the masters of word, poets [...]”<sup>61</sup> (Idem: 210). The Cubo-Futurists were “the first to get control of ‘the secret’ of language”<sup>62</sup>, but the final fulfillment of that task is still ahead. (Idem 213)

### *Platonov – a grammatical engineer?*

Vinokur’s programmatic text offers a coherent theory of linguistic transformation and illustrates it with some striking examples. However, a practical model of *how* to achieve linguistic invention is conspicuously absent: Vinokur’s reading public does not receive any explicit directions. Nonetheless, the theoretical framework and the given examples do not leave much doubt about the directions one should look in.

Vinokur’s program, it seems, displays many convergences with the poetic language of Platonov’s mature works. First of all, one can see extra arguments for the assumption that the technological-engineering character of Vinokur’s linguistic project may have been close to Platonov’s own interests and social and artistic aspirations. To the already mentioned technological metaphors one can add *языковое изобретение*, *лингвистическая инженерия*, and *массовое языковое строительство*. Also new terms related to “production” are easy to link with Platonov, e.g. *ковать* and *производство*. Even the title of Vinokur’s article (‘Футуристы – строители языка’) – may have drawn Platonov’s attention. Cf., for example, the title of part of the first drafting of the novel *Čevengur*: ‘Строители страны’ (‘Builders of the Country’). Second, when focusing on Platonov’s poetic practice, it seems acceptable to speak about his linguistic oeuvre as not just *an* example, but a *classic* example of “linguistic engineering” in a Vinokurian sense. (However, it is important to emphasize that the possible convergences to be mentioned in the following paragraphs are not related to the Cubo-Futurists’ linguistic oeuvre as such (i.e. not to their linguistic peculiarities, their philosophy of language or their artistic views), but to Vinokur’s reinterpretation of the Cubo-Futurists’ artistic project, of the former’s transformation of the latter’s project into an ideologically motivated political project. In other words, Platonov’s linguistic practice, as discussed in this article, is related to the Cubo-Futurists’ language experiments as they are seen through the prism of an ideologically motivated Soviet linguist – Vinokur.<sup>63</sup>)

The parallels with the “grammatical word creation”, praised so much by Vinokur as “genuine linguistic invention”, suggest themselves. Despite Platonov’s language factually being as far from the speech of the masses as the Cubo-Futurists’ linguistic experiments, it is possible to interpret the former – as does Vinokur with the latter in his linguistic program – as if it *draws* material from the speech of the masses. The language problems of the masses (e.g. the veneration for, and the often literal interpretation of, the *novoyaz* by the masses) are a

focal point of Platonov's work, both thematically and on the level of language – witness Platonov's play with clichés in language in general and in communist language in particular. Much more important than this somewhat biased interpretation of the *narodnost'* of Platonov's linguistic practice, however, is the fact that the very mechanism of the second dominant of Platonov's poetic language – the consequent, distinctive deformation of the microsyntactic norms – consists in the appearance of new meanings through the creation of new relations between existing linguistic elements: lexemes that normally are not supposed to be joint for semantic reasons are combined which causes, among other things, a semantic shift. Essentially then, one of Platonov's principal linguistic characteristics consists exactly in what Vinokur theoretically understands under "linguistic invention" (it must be said, though, that in the case of Platonov, "reinvention" might be a better definition).

It is obvious that Platonov's linguistic innovations match Vinokur's description of "linguistic invention". The question has to be asked, however, whether Platonov's linguistic practice also coincides with the examples of "linguistic invention" that Vinokur provides us with. The prepositionless experiments by Burljuk are definitely less prototypical cases of "linguistic invention" than Platonov's experiments: in the case of Platonov one can actually see a factual creation based on the reorganization of the existing relations between linguistic elements, whereas in Burljuk's case the reorganization is rather 'passive' (it is achieved by omitting elements). Aseev's poetic etymologies are less 'passive' than Burljuk's omissions: words are actively selected and combined on the basis of their phonetic and semantic characteristics. In contradistinction to Platonov's recombination of lexemes, the result of Aseev's recombination does not really generate new meanings, but it does arouse new associations. In comparison with Majakovskij's and Chlebnikov's "morphological" word creation, Platonov's poetic practice is a more moderate kind of "grammatical engineering". Platonov's device of semantico-syntactic deformation does not affect the relations between parts of words – as do Vinokur's classic examples of "linguistic invention", – but the relations between separate words or lexemes. As such, Platonov's poetic language seems to have at least the same potential for the tasks Vinokur defined for "linguistic invention" as Chlebnikov's and Majakovskij's. Maybe it has even more potential. It seems not to require the same linguistic knowledge (more precisely, knowledge on how words are built) as Chlebnikov's and Majakovskij's types of "linguistic invention" do: it is not necessary to understand how words are built or made out of smaller constituents, it is enough to recombine, maybe even at random, existing words.

All these facts – i.e. the identical social and ideological motivations, the possible theoretical convergences and the factual similarities – certainly make the assumption that Platonov may have been susceptible to Vinokur's linguistic project very plausible. The only counter-argument against this assumption is the fact that in his review of the journal *Na postu* Platonov explicitly rejects Kamenskij's word creation in *The Juggler*. As was mentioned above, Platonov calls *zaum*'-like word creation an uninteresting part of the LEF-program, "an object to scoff at". One may get the impression that Platonov did not, after all, favor any kind of linguistic invention, but Platonov's disapproval of *zaum*'-experiments like Kamenskij's *The Juggler* is not only in keeping with Čužak's argument – Platonov explicitly refers to it – that the Futurists should look for *new* ways of inventing language, but also with Vinokur's critique on the "meaningless" *zaum*' experiments by Kručënych. A similar view on the "meaninglessness" of some types of poetic language can be seen in Platonov's early article 'Пролетарская поэзия'. Building further on the assumption that words always consist of three "elements" – *idea*, *form*, and *sound*, – albeit in different percentual combinations, Platonov contends that true, ideal literature consists in a "merging" of these three elements. When a word is homogeneous – that is, when the three constituting elements merge into one

another, when a “synthesis” of the elements is achieved – it “[...] receives its greatest value and energy-wise it becomes close to reality”.<sup>64</sup> (Платонов 2004б: 165) Consequently,

*“[a]ll attempts to create a poetic school on the basis of the predominance of one or another element of the word must fail: for that one, first and foremost, needs to change the essence, the nature of the word, having built it on the basis of one element alone.*

*However, the word then will be incredibly pale, gloomy, and it will be only an unclear image of a phenomenon it is created for.”* (Idem: 165; emphasis in the original – BD)

*“[в]се попытки создания поэтической школы на преобладании какого-нибудь элемента слова не могут иметь успеха: для этого надо прежде всего изменить сущность, природу слова, построив его на одном элементе.*

*Но слово тогда получится невероятно бледное, сумрачное и будет только неясным образом явления, которым оно сотворено.”*

Platonov’s utterance easily can be read as a reproach aimed at literary movements, where the accent lies solely on one element of language.<sup>65</sup> The most obvious literary movement to meet this criterion of predominance of one or another constituent element is pre-revolutionary Futurism, which has form (or image) and / or sound as its core business. Consequently, it is not difficult to see the resemblance with Vinokur’s perception of “meaningless” *zaum*. Vinokur’s negative attitude towards *zaum* does not prevent him from seeing the benefits of other, closely related types of “linguistic invention”, and the same certainly may apply to Platonov, too.

#### *For a higher language culture: the battle with clichés*

In Vinokur’s second article, entitled ‘О революционной фразеологии’, a different, but no less – and for the linguist’s contemporaries maybe even more – important, way to raise the language level is proposed.<sup>66</sup> In the article the linguist discusses a different aspect of his “new class approach to language” or “language culture”, i.e. the necessity to establish and pursue a new language politics (“языковая политика”) for the new Soviet language, for the new language of the masses. Such a “conscious, organizing influence of society on language” (Винокур 1923б: 104)<sup>67</sup> or “social influence on language” (Idem: 105)<sup>68</sup>, as he calls it, has to “regulate the fortunes of language” (Ibidem)<sup>69</sup>, more specifically – the “fortunes of the revolution in language” (Idem: 106)<sup>70</sup>. This ‘social influence’, says Vinokur, should be based on “an exact, scientific understanding”. (Ibidem)<sup>71</sup>

In contradistinction to his first programmatic article in *LEF*, Vinokur does not concentrate his attention on the level of “grammar” (i.e. on the relations between linguistic elements), but on the level of “phraseology” – “[...] the totality of linguistic phenomena with an already [...] fixed form, meant to be used in specific conditions that may be precisely determined.”<sup>72</sup> (Idem: 108) Vinokur’s definition, and his assumption that phraseology is primarily a case of lexis (Idem: 108), permits us to understand under “phraseology” not only phraseologisms, phraseological units and idioms – i.e. phraseology in its most narrow meaning (combinations of words with a fixed meaning which often is different from the sum of meanings of its constituents), – but also words in general (political terms), regularly used, but not (yet) semantically altered collocations of words (“the coming of capitalism” – “наступление капитала”), whole expressions and / or sentences (e.g. constantly recurring titles in newspapers, like “Amidst Compromisers” – “Среди соглашателей”, or the slogan

“Proletarians of all countries, unite” – “Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь”), and even socialist discourse as a whole. (Cf. Idem 110-116)<sup>73</sup> In the linguist’s opinion, exerting “social influence” on language is done most easily at the level of vocabulary, and, hence, at the level of phraseology (where words are combined into new semantic units). Other levels of language, like rules of grammar (e.g., conjugation and declension), are much more difficult to change. The reason for this, says Vinokur, lies in the fact that lexis is perceived “directly”: “[...] for the assimilation of new lexical elements only a minimal quantity of association is needed [...]”. (Idem: 109)<sup>74</sup>

How is all this related to revolutionary phraseology (in its broadest sense, thus including everything from phraseological units to recurring elements of the revolutionary discourse) and how and why should language politics influence this specific part of phraseology? According to Vinokur, revolutionary phraseology, being related both to language and to politics and ideology, played an essential role in the process of the political turnover of 1917. First and foremost, in the (pre-)revolutionary years, a general language renewal took place. (Idem: 109-110) Later, the new revolutionary phraseology became a *conditio sine qua non* for the socio-political changes after the revolution: *not* using it, *not* speaking the revolutionary discourse was impossible for a genuine adherent of the revolution and of the socio-political changes. After the revolution, however, the former linguistic dynamicity turned into stagnation: the revolutionary phraseology became “meaningless”, it became a collection of empty clichés, of “meaningless sounds” (“обесмысленные звуки”). (Idem: 111) This stagnation, in Vinokur’s eyes, is dangerous. Using empty, “petrified” (“окаменелые”) expressions and slogans also contaminates the thinking process: thinking in clichés can only be “nonsensical” (“бессмысленное”), since using meaningless words and expressions implies not understanding what we say or even equals not thinking at all. (Idem: 113-114) This devaluation of thought caused by language fossilization has severe political implications, says Vinokur:

“Language is a terrible force. Through language one can win a victory. But a ridiculous language, a language which has lost its meaning – that is a great threat. And whosoever had a look at the white press, who listened to the talks of the bourgeois, commenting on the Bolshevik slogans, especially now, during the NEP, he will understand in what sense one can talk here about political danger.” (Idem: 115)

“Слово – страшная сила. Им можно побеждать. Но смешное, обесмысленное слово – это великая угроза. И тот, кто держал когда-либо в руках белую прессу, кто прислушивался к разговорам буржуа, комментирующих (sic) большевистские лозунги, особенно сейчас, при нэпе, тот поймет в каком смысле можно здесь говорить о политической опасности”.

In other words, the devaluation of language and thought can also lead to a devaluation of the new system and, as such, endanger the socio-political change that was brought about. For that reason, as Vinokur explains, it is necessary to “rejuvenate” (“омолодить”) Russian phraseology. Vinokur sees examples of this “reviving” in the play upon words in *лучше меньше, да лучше* – *better less, but better* of V.I. Lenin, *малая кровь* – *little / small blood* (instead of *мало крови* – *little blood*, or: *minimal bloodshed*) of L.D. Trotsky, or Majakovskij’s propaganda pieces and poems in the journal *Искусство коммуны* (*Art of the Commune*), like ‘Поэт рабочий’.<sup>75</sup> Such utterances, the linguist writes, lead the recipient directly to the idea behind the words. (Idem: 116)

Of course, these examples are only isolated cases, while a more organized, mass-scaled rejuvenation is needed. For that reason Vinokur proposes an “industrial”

(“производственный”) approach in order to revive the revolutionary phraseology. (Idem: 116-117) In order to achieve this goal, “language politics” have to have a look at “the highest form of language culture” (“высшая форма культуры языка”) – poetry. Poets can offer a look into the whole stock of elements and devices – “the raw material” (“сырьё”) – that may help in this particular aspect of “language building” – the “phraseological processing” (“фразеологическая обработка”). (Idem: 117) As in the case of “grammatical engineering”, linguists, i.e. the “language technologists” / “linguistic technicians” (“языковые технологи”), must play a leading role in all this: they will take upon themselves the leadership of the new language politics and direct the whole language building process with their linguistic knowledge. (Idem: 118)

As was also the case in the first article on “language building”, Vinokur does not really provide a practical model showing *how exactly* to rejuvenate language. Only a theoretical framework and a few examples are given. Vinokur’s main concern – to stop the fossilization of the revolutionary language in order to protect the new political system – conveys the impression that the most obvious way to reach the linguist’s goal – i.e. to expose the clichéd character of “revolutionary phraseology” by means of playing upon it, or parodying it – may be the true path to follow. However, as the reader will have noticed, the examples Vinokur gives have not much to do with “revolutionary phraseology” in its narrowest sense. It is not “revolutionary language” that is played upon, but language in general (albeit in the speech of revolutionary figures). This implies that, for Vinokur, the remedy against the fossilized revolutionary “phraseology” does not confine itself to the play upon “revolutionary phraseology” or upon “phraseology” in general (i.e. in its narrowest sense) (but nor does it exclude this possibility). On the contrary, the antidote against devaluing the new language consists in a rejuvenation of “phraseology” in its broadest sense – collocations of words or other combinations of words. Lenin’s utterance *лучше меньше, да лучше* is indeed nothing more than a play with the different meanings and functions of the adverb *лучше*, which is not expected to double for that may seem tautological (a deviation from a rule of linguistic logic). Trotsky’s *малая кровь* is a violation of a collocation rule: *кровь* normally does not combine with the adjective *малый* (lexico-semantic collocation rule), but it can collocate with the adverbial form of that adjective – *мало* (morphosyntactic collocation rule). The following lines from Majakovskij’s ‘Поэт рабочий’ (‘The Worker Poet’, 1918) – “Отгородимся от бурь словесных молом. // К делу! // Работа жива и нова. // А праздных ораторов – // на мельницу! // К мукомолам! // Водой речей вертеть жернова.” (We will fence ourselves off from verbal storms with a mole (pier). // Let us act! // The work is keen and new. // And the idle orators – // to the mill! // To the millers! // Let them twirl the millstones with the water of their speeches.) – contain a play upon the semantics of two keywords– *speech* and *water*. First of all, words that normally do not match, are combined. The combination *молотом отгородиться от бурь словесных* – *to fence / cut oneself off from verbal storms with a mole / pier* strikes the reader, because a *mole* may help to fence oneself off from *real storms*, not from *verbal storms*. The same goes for another combination, i.e. *вертеть жернова водой речей*. Usually, or even prototypically, it is the *water itself* that turns millstones (*вода вертит жернова*), and not people turning the millstones *with water* (\*они вертят жернова водой) (and not with their own powers – *собственными силами*), and certainly not with *water of speeches*. Both combinations may be perceived as poetic – non-normative, but perfectly acceptable from a poetic point of view – utterances, which, however, at first sight do not generate a logic meaning or image. Nonetheless, the combination of these two non-normative, but at first sight purely poetic collocations in this specific context evokes several semantic associations and activates several fixed expressions that are not present in the text itself, but only in the mind of the person reading the poem. The combination of *speech*, *water* and *mill / miller / millstone* leads

the reader to such expressions as *налить в речь воды* – *to talk about nothing*, *лечь воду* – *to waffle on*, *лечь воду на чью-то мельницу* – *to afford support to someone's case*, or even *молочь воду (в ступе)* – *to beat the air / to mill the wind* (litt. *to crush the water in the mortar*). Hence, the speeches of the “idle orators” contain so much *water*, that it can be used to turn the millstones in the mills. Thus not water makes the millstones twirl, but the speeches of these “idle orators”, i.e. the “verbal storms” (where the element water is also present, not only in *storm*, but also in an expression as *буря в стакане воды* – *a storm in a teacup*), the idle talk the poetic voice wants himself to fence off from. In other words, the non-normative combination of lexemes within this very specific context leads to different associations and to the eventual accumulation of these associations.

All this may seem to contradict Vinokur's main objective – to rejuvenate “revolutionary language”, – but actually serves the more general objective set by the linguist when defining “language culture”: to eliminate the inertia which is inherent to language. The problem of the fossilization and devaluation of the “revolutionary language” is only one aspect of a larger problem. Consequently, it is plausible to suppose that there can be no separate solution for this sub-problem.

### *Platonov – battling with clichéd language?*

It is evident that, from the 1920s onwards, the new language turning into an amalgam of clichés was a generally known problem. Linguists, writers, poets, journalists, cultural agents, politicians, officials and ordinary people – many people were concerned about the fossilization of the Russian language after the revolution.<sup>76</sup> Also Platonov touches upon this topic, when in 1931 he writes the following in a notebook: “With backward people one has to speak namely the official language [...] – otherwise they will understand you, but not believe you, while now they will believe you, without having understood you.” (Платонов 2000б: 79, underlined in the original – BD)<sup>77</sup>

Consequently, it would be tendentious to assume that Vinokur's article on “revolutionary phraseology” may have directly influenced Platonov's poetic choices: if there are any indications in that direction, then it must be considered to be a coincidence, since it was such a common theme. However, that assumption nonetheless seems acceptable for various reasons. First of all, as we have seen, Platonov explicitly speaks positively about the linguist's general project of “language building” – a project which is set forth in the two articles discussed in this paper. Secondly, there are clear convergences between Platonov's poetic practice and Vinokur's ideas on how Futurist-style “grammatical linguistic invention” may be a point of reference for raising the “language culture”. Consequently, it is not unthinkable that there are also convergences with the linguist's second article on “language culture”. Thirdly, Vinokur's rejuvenation project is also highly “technological”, which may have attracted Platonov's attention. Besides the general technological metaphors mentioned above, some “production” terms are used here too. The linguist proposes an “industrial approach” to the linguistic “raw materials” as an antidote against devaluation of the revolutionary language (the linguistic aspect) and of the communist system itself (the social aspect). This approach consists in the combination of “language technology” of linguists and “language building” of poets-writers, who both will “process” the “raw material”.

Finally, the actual method Vinokur proposes for the rejuvenation of the Soviet language reminds us of the way in which Platonov actually treats language. If one understands Vinokur's call to “rejuvenate” the “revolutionary language” – i.e. to expose the clichéd character of that language – literally (thus without taking into account the linguist's examples), then it is not difficult to see Platonov's parodic treatment of revolutionary



language as a good example of the core principle of the rejuvenation project. If one understands Vinokur's call in a broader, and actually, as has been illustrated above, more correct sense – i.e. how the rejuvenating practice is presented in the linguist's examples, – then a similar conclusion can be made: Platonov's treatment of language in general not only matches Vinokur's aims, but also corresponds with the linguist's examples. The essence of Platonov's mature poetic language consists in the uncovering of the clichéd nature of language, of linguistic inertia. Words / lexemes are combined with one another in formations that the linguistic norms do not allow: rules determining valence structures, lexico-semantic and morpho-syntactic collocation rules, and other semantically conditioned rules (e.g. rules of linguistic logic) are violated. This leads to a rupture of the reader's expectations, and to a semantic shift. Consequently, the linguistic elements used are emphasized and their respective meaning(s) – i.e. both the standard (or clichéd) meaning(s) and their new, unexpected meaning(s) – are activated simultaneously, which lead to the accumulation of different meanings. Platonov's approach to language – the violation of semantico-syntactic norms and a subsequent semantic shift – certainly can compete with the examples Vinokur gives. Majakovskij's treatment of language in the example given by Vinokur is very similar to Platonov's non-normative recombination of lexemes, but with the essential difference that the former takes place through the combination of sentences or other greater syntactic structures (a broader context), and not through the combination of separate words alone. Lenin's play with the threat of tautology and Trotsky's violation of the lexico-semantic collocation rule of *кровь* are more moderate deviations than Platonov's and Majakovskij's deformations.

#### *Conclusion. Platonov – an unexpected, silent follower of Vinokur?*

But let us get back to the key question of this paper: is there a possibility that Vinokur's linguistic texts on “language building” influenced Platonov's poetic practice? Are there enough elements to state that such an influence may have taken place? It seems that the answer to these questions can only be positive. Platonov, who generally is considered to be a literary *Einzelgänger* – cf. Platonov's classic answer to the question which literary movement he belongs to (“None, I have my own”<sup>78</sup>) (cf. Корниенко 2001: 11), – may have grasped the essence of Vinokur's ideas on linguistic invention and linguistic rejuvenation. As the series of reviews of 1924 in *Октябрь мысли* shows us, Platonov was acquainted with the content of the articles Vinokur published in *LEF*. Moreover, he even explicitly expressed his positive attitude towards Vinokur's linguistic project itself and towards other theoretical articles in *LEF* – by Arvatov, Čužak, Gorlov, and Tret'jakov – that deal with similar topics and/or build further on Vinokur's conception. This fact is remarkable for two reasons. First of all, until the 1930s, Platonov almost never expressed his views on contemporary artists or artistic trends in public. The series of reviews of 1924, therefore, is an exceptional source of information on Platonov's personal artistic views. Second, the subject of Vinokur's articles links up with Platonov's personal interest in linguistics and poetic aesthetics, which found expression already in different articles in the early 1920s. Platonov expressed his approval of Vinokur's linguistic project on the eve of the writer's two-year existential crisis. In 1924 Platonov started to doubt what path he had to choose in order be most useful for communist society: to continue to work as an engineer, or to become a professional writer. Until 1926 he would write almost nothing but then, after the two-year silence, Platonov decided to become a professional writer. It is in this period that the shift from non-linguistic and moderate linguistic experimentation to the more extreme linguistic experimentation of his mature oeuvre took place.

A factual comparison of Vinokur's linguistic project and Platonov's poetic practice shows that there are clear convergences between them. Vinokur's motivation – to raise the language culture of the masses in order to implement genuine communism – is similar to Platonov's – to help build a communist society, to work for the sake of the masses. The images Vinokur uses – metaphors of engineering, inventing, building, technology, machinery – certainly may have drawn the attention of Platonov-the-engineer. Moreover, Vinokur's definition of poets and writers as "language engineers" (and of linguists as "technicians") not only perfectly matches Platonov as a hybrid between writer and engineer, but also solves Platonov's existential doubts (a writer can be as useful to society as an engineer) and fits in with Platonov's own conception about the equality of "ideal" art and "ideal" science, on the one hand, and about the role of "the art of language" as the first step towards the eventual reorganization of matter, of the world, on the other (as expressed in 'Proletarian Poetry'). When it comes to the practical aspects, the parallels between Platonov's poetic language and Vinokur's prescriptive project are too evident to ignore. Platonov's poetic practice – at least the two dominant types of linguistic innovation the writer uses – matches Vinokur's descriptions and examples of "linguistic invention" and "phraseological rejuvenation". Platonov's "language of the masses" and his parodic treatment of revolutionary clichés perfectly fit into both subprojects – at least when reading only the theoretical aspects of these subprojects, thus without paying any attention to the examples Vinokur gives. Platonov's semantico-syntactic deformations comply with all the requirements of "grammatical engineering" Vinokur expounds in his article on the Futurists' literary practice (i.e. both the theoretical and the practical aspects). The same semantico-syntactic deformations also match the linguist's proposal to "rejuvenate" the revolutionary phraseology. Moreover, Platonov's poetic practice is not just a duplicate or a copy deprived of any inspiration or personal stroke, but seems a very personal and peculiar answer to Vinokur's ideas and examples. Platonov's semantico-syntactic deformations are of a more moderate type of "grammatical engineering" in comparison with Chlebnikov's and Majakovskij's morphological neologisms or Majakovskij's accumulation of semantics, but they certainly stand the test. However, they go further than the rather moderate cases of language play by Lenin, Trotsky, Burljuk, and Aseev. The essence, however, is the same.

A definite answer to the questions raised in this paper cannot be given. It is unclear whether we can speak of a direct or indirect influence of Vinokur on Platonov, of a distant (conscious or unconscious) response to the linguist's (and LEF's) ideas, or of an accidental coincidence between two thinkers being thrilled by the discussions on language in the impetuous 1920s. Maybe Platonov's personal archive will reveal new materials which may serve as arguments 'pro' or 'contra' the present paper's central hypothesis. For now, not more can be done than to show that there are many essential convergences between Vinokur's "language building project" and Platonov's poetic practice.<sup>79</sup> That alone is already remarkable. However, these facts in no way deny – or can be used for that purpose – the writer's particularity: Platonov remains a literary *Einzelgänger*, or, to use a term of H. Günther and A.A. Hansen-Löve, "ein Autor zwischen allen Stühlen".<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Подобные тексты невозможно читать 'мимо' языка, на котором они написаны, – ибо мы далеко не всегда способны разделить языковую информацию на 'главную' и 'второстепенную', не уверены в своем праве игнорировать те или иные языковые нюансы как незначительные [...]"

<sup>2</sup> More than once it has been shown that Platonov's poetic language of the mature period is a matter of conscious choice. It differs from the writer's earlier works, from his publicistic texts and letters, and from his own speech (cf. the well-known shorthand report). Furthermore, we can see the creative process of creating a new language in his manuscripts (corrections, adaptations, etc.). Platonov's poetic language is elaborated and systemic.

<sup>3</sup> In this work the following abbreviations are used: Č for *Čevengur* – *Chevengur*; K for *Kotlovan* – *The Foundation Pit*; SM for *Sčastlivaja Moskva* – *Happy Moscow*. The number after the abbreviation indicates the page where the quoted example can be found. For *Čevengur* I quote from (Платонов 1988: 188-551), for *Kotlovan* – from (Платонов 2000: 19-116), and for *Sčastlivaja Moskva* – from (Платонов 1999: 9-105).

<sup>4</sup> However, analyzing groups of 'Platonovisms' from one or more literary texts sharing similar semantic characteristics (e.g. verbs of thinking) and similar formal ones (e.g. non-normative, redundant spatial constructions) allows us to shed light on certain aspects of Platonov's conceptualization of the world. See, for example, (Dhooge 2007).

<sup>5</sup> More on this type of platonovism, cf. (Кобозева & Лайфер 1990: 128-130).

<sup>6</sup> Other, but less systemic and frequent features of Platonov's peculiar language use consist in stylistic and pragmatic violations. On stylistic deviations see, among others, (Кожевникова 1990: 164-165, 168; Шимонюк 1997: 36-37, 78-83; Буйлов 1997: 33; Hodel 2001: 176, 198-201; Михеев 2003: 323-329, 334-341). On pragmatic deviations in Platonov's oeuvre, see (Кобозева & Лайфер 1990: 127; Шимонюк 1997: 37-38, 66-73).

<sup>7</sup> See Platonov's remark in his letter of (supposedly) January 25, 1927: "Я написал их (Эпифанские шлюзы – BD) в необычном стиле, отчасти славянской вязью – тягучим слогом. Это может многим не понравиться. // Мне тоже не нравится – так как-то вышло. Пускай остается." – "I wrote them (The Sluices of Epiphany) in an unusual style, partly in Slavic vjaz' – in a viscous style. Possibly many will not like that. // I do not like it either – it somehow turned out like that. Let it remain like that." (Платонов 2009a: 465)

Later, in a letter of January 20, 1927, Platonov emphasizes that the editors G.Z. Litvin-Molotov and I.M. Rubanovskij should leave his poetic language unaltered: "Обрати внимание Молотова и Рубановского на необходимость точного сохранения моего языка. Пусть не спутают." – "Draw Molotov's and Rubanovskij's attention to the necessity to preserve my language exactly as it is. Let them not muddle with it." (Платонов 2009a: 471, underlined in the original – BD)

<sup>8</sup> It is important to stress that these interpretational modes do not exclude each other: Platonov's language cannot be read in a monosemantic way. E. Tolstaja-Segal defined Platonov's oeuvre as "многомерный" – multilayered or multimeasured – (Толстая-Сегал 1978a: 170) and the same certainly can be said for Platonov's language use, too.

<sup>9</sup> One may think that Platonov's peculiar style is a reaction to the linguistic reality of the post-revolutionary years, with its *rabkor*-language and Soviet newspeak. At first glance these aspects might seem to be the most evident possible external sources of influence. A closer look, however, shows that these two sources may have influenced Platonov only to a lesser degree. Of course, one of the dominants of Platonov's style is a play with words and expressions of the then new political system. However, Platonov's poetic language can only indirectly be related to *rabkor*-language and *novojaz*. These two aspects of the post-revolutionary language primarily affected lexis, word formation and style but left the very "foundation" of language – grammar and syntax – untouched. (Винокур 1924: 128-129; Карцевский 2000: 209, 261) Platonov's poetic language parodies the post-revolutionary language (aside from clichéd language in general) but, essentially, has little to

do with lexis or word formation: it affects the semantic aspects of syntax, the relations *between* different linguistic elements.

<sup>10</sup> E.A. Jablovskij states that Platonov's decision to adapt his distinctive style was primarily a question of his own conception of the world. Only at a second stage did external philosophical, scientific or political views perhaps play a role but that must have been subordinate to Platonov's inner life. In other words, Platonov's peculiar language use is the logical consequence of Platonov's *Weltanschauung* (which "crystallized" in his poetic language), rather than a rational decision caused by external elements alone. (Яблоков 2009: 253-254)

<sup>11</sup> E. Tolstaja-Segal has suggested that B.A. Pil'njak exerted a great influence on Platonov (cf. the play that both writers wrote together – 'Дураки на периферии' ('Idiots on the Periphery', 1928)). (Толстая-Сегал 1978) Pil'njak's style, however, is very different from Platonov's, so it seems rather improbable that Platonov's peculiar style (partially) came into being under the influence of Pil'njak. Both writing styles, however, should be examined more thoroughly. A first step in this direction is the talk on this subject M.Ju. Mischeev read at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Platonov Conference, held at the Moscow Institute for World Literature at the Russian Academy of Sciences on September 21-23, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> "[...] в мои задачи не входит доказывать правильность тезиса тов. Чужака. Он сам это делает достаточно убедительно."

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Л.Д. Троцкий, *Литература и революция*. Москва: Политиздат, [1923] 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Л.С. Сосновский, Желтая кофта из советского ситца, *Правда*, №113 (24 мая), 1923.

<sup>15</sup> More on the journal *Круг* cf. (Stephan 1995: 23-24, 44).

<sup>16</sup> A recurring sound combination in V. Kamenskij's sound poem 'Жонглёр'. Many critics would focus on this sound poem while criticizing LEF. Among them – L.S. Sosnovskij (cf. above) and V. Poljanskij (B. Полянский, О левом фронте в искусстве, *Под знаменем марксизма*, №4-5: 197-209, 1923). Several *lefovtsy* wrote critical answers to these critics. Cf., for example, Б.И. Арватов, Так полемизировать некультурно, *ЛЕФ* №1/3: 6-11, 1923.

<sup>17</sup> "О 'згара-амбе' трепаться нечего. Это только предмет для зубоскальства."

<sup>18</sup> "[...] нельзя описывать закат и нельзя писать рассказов."

<sup>19</sup> Trjet'jakov treats the importance of shocking the public in Futurist art and performances; the assumed bourgeois nature of Futurist art; the supposed link with the Italian fascist Futurist F. Marinetti or with the anti-proletarian ex-Futurist I. Severjanin; the innovative character of Futurist art and the "passeist" character of many new proletarian poets; the need to study Futurist art in order to fully understand it. Cf. Третьяков 1923: 155-159.

<sup>20</sup> In a letter of the summer of 1928, where Platonov mentions having met again Šklovskij, he even compares formalism with bureaucracy. For more about this cf. (Корниенко 2009: 387; cf. also Платонов 2009в: 494-495). For more on the relationship between Platonov and Šklovskij, cf. (Галушкин 1994; Платонов 2009в: 494-495).

<sup>21</sup> At the same time, however, says N.V. Kornienko, the novella 'Однажды любившие' is also a refutation of the Formalists' idea that letters and diaries of the Russian classics are to be read as aesthetic documents and not as personal documents or documents related to the writer's personality (and, as such, Platonov's experiment is also a polemic answer to Šklovskij's epistolary novella *ZOO. Письма не о любви – ZOO, or Letters Not About Love*). Platonov is convinced that, as he puts it in his article 'Фабрика литературы', that "receivers of life" ("приемники жизни") – notebooks, archives, memoirs, etc. – can serve as the basis for new literary forms. (Корниенко 2009: 380, 382-389)

<sup>22</sup> "Надо писать отныне не словами, выдумывая и копируя живой язык, а прямо кусками самого живого языка [...], монтируя эти куски в произведение."

<sup>23</sup> Vinokur's programmatic texts and ideas never became widespread. The linguist's work on the Futurists was even banned in the 1930s.

<sup>24</sup> The article, however, was published only in 1922 – *Кузница*, No. 9, p. 28-32.

<sup>25</sup> Th. Seifrid asserts that 'Пролетарская поэзия' is a response to the "life-building" theory of LEF: "Where LEF theoretization had emphasized movement outward from art into the world, however, Platonov returns the 'life-organizing' activities of proletarian poetry to the domain of language: man is as yet unable to attain his final goal of 'organizing' the matter of the world, he argues in a Bogdanovian vein, and so must for the time being take up the 'organization' of words in poetry. But he overcomes the paradox of this apparent retreat from reality into art by insisting that words are not abstract symbols, but extensions of realia, of matter itself [...]. It is because the essential relation between words and their real-world referents makes language contiguous with the realm of matter, Platonov argues, that the 'organization of the symbols of things, words' will initiate that process by which the proletariat will eventually master the 'organization' of those things-in-themselves". (Seifrid 1992: 92)

According to E.A. Jablovskij 'Пролетарская поэзия' was written as a response to a call of the editorial board of the new journal *Кузница*, which published theoretical articles on poetics written by poets formerly



affiliated to Proletkul't. In these articles the authors regularly debated with A. Bogdanov. (Яблоков 2004: 369-370) According to Jablov, Platonov's article looks like an "anachronism" in the journal. Thematically and stylistically the article is closer to the universal Proletkul't structures of the 1918s-1920s. Platonov does not carry on polemics with Bogdanov, he even very carefully talks about the *kuznitsy's* traditional solution to the theme of work – the substitution of the Proletkul't "machinism" ("машинизм") with "labour lyrics" ("трудовая лирика"). (Idem: 371)

<sup>26</sup> O. Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1922) was translated into Russian in 1923, but was commented on already in 1922 in a collection of articles on Spengler – *Освальд Шпенглер и 'Закат Европы'* – *Oswald Spengler and "The Decline of the West"*. Spengler's ideas were widely discussed in Russia. Cf. (Корниенко 2004: 399-402).

<sup>27</sup> Many of Vinokur's ideas and concepts can also be found in his later *Культура языка. Очерки лингвистической технологии*, Москва: Работник просвещения, 1925. In their writings on Vinokur's linguistic project, both K. Hirschkop (1990) and H. Stephan (1995) often refer to definitions and concepts in this later work, which are often clearer, more elaborated, and more balanced. However, in this article, where the link between the articles and their reception by Platonov is crucial, such an anachronistic approach seems undesirable. Hence, only the definitions and concepts of Vinokur's 1923 and 1924 articles are used in this article.

More on the evolution from the separate articles to the 1925 book, cf. (Reznik 2010).

<sup>28</sup> For a thorough discussion of Vinokur's 'utilitarian linguistics', i.e. his idea that linguistics should not only be descriptive, but also should be 'socially useful' and affect or guide all aspects of public speech, cf. (Reznik 2003: 128-132). Cf. also (Hirschkop 1990).

<sup>29</sup> The language debates after the October Revolution are the central topic of M. Gorham's in-depth study *Speaking in Soviet Tongues. Language Culture and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia* (2003).

<sup>30</sup> "[...] отвечает общему культурному уровню данной социальной среды"

<sup>31</sup> "организующие моменты языка в их системе"

<sup>32</sup> "[...] не только учиться языку, но и делать язык, не только организовывать элементы языка, но и изобретать новые связи между этими элементами"

<sup>33</sup> M. Gorham states that the term "language culture" does not really match Vinokur's initial concept of "культура языка", since it is a translation of the term as used in late-Soviet didactic discourse, where it referred to linguistic purism. (2001: 616) Instead, as L. Ryazanova-Clarke argues, H. Schiffmann's term "linguistic culture" may be a more appropriate rendition of Vinokur's concept. (2006: 32-33) On this term cf. also Stephan 1995: 77.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. in this respect the subtitle of Vinokur's monograph *Культура языка* (1925) – *Очерки лингвистической технологии* (*Language Culture – Sketches of Linguistic Technology*), or the publishing house – *Работник просвещения* (*Worker of Education*).

<sup>35</sup> Some of Vinokur's other articles in *LEF* also deal with the problem of "language culture", but only indirectly. Cf., for example, 'О пуризме' – 'On Purism' (*LEF*, 1923, No. 1/4, p. 156-171) or 'Язык нашей газеты' – 'The Language of our Press' (Винокур 1924).

<sup>36</sup> Besides, the theme "creative work (literature, art work) as a machine" or, vice versa, "the machine as a creative work" is omnipresent in Platonov's oeuvre. Cf. the following fragment from the finale of 'В звездной пустыне' ('In the Starry Wilderness, 1921): "Day was breaking. Čagov arrived in the hostel and sat down at the sketches of his beloved machine on the table, at his great project, which he was creating as a poem" – "Светало. Чагов пришел в общежитие и сел за стол за чертежи любимой машины, за свой великий проект, который он творил как поэму". (Платонов 2004a: 181, emphasis added – BD)

<sup>37</sup> "изобретать новые методы их сочинения"

<sup>38</sup> "Критик должен стать строителем 'машин', производящих литературу, на самих же машинах будет трудиться и продуцировать художник."

<sup>39</sup> "поэзия пролетарской эпохи".

<sup>40</sup> "[и]зобретение машин, творчество новых железных, рабочих конструкций [...]".

<sup>41</sup> "Каждая новая машина – это настоящая пролетарская поэма".

<sup>42</sup> Of course, this remark raises another question: was there a difference between poetry and prose for Platonov, or not? In his publicistic articles the writer often uses both terms as close terms, and sometimes even as synonyms. This aspect of Platonov's poetic conception definitely deserves extra attention.

<sup>43</sup> "Каждый новый великий труд над изменением природы ради человека – пролетарская, четкая, волнующая проза".

<sup>44</sup> On this article cf. also (Hirschkop 1990; Stephan 1995: 77-83; Gorham 2003: 41-42).

<sup>45</sup> The social interpretation Vinokur gives to the Cubo-Futurists' linguistic experiments is not that special as it might seem at first sight. Also some of the Cubo-Futurists themselves, like V.V. Majakovskij, or of the Cubo-Futurists' successors (the *lefovcy*), interpreted Cubo-Futurist art in a social light. Cf. (Мазаев 1975: 115-152).

- <sup>46</sup> M. Gorham speaks of “the tongue-tiedness of the masses”. (2003: 41)
- <sup>47</sup> “[...] показали путь лингвистической инженерии [...]”.
- <sup>48</sup> “[...] поставили проблему ‘безъязыкой улицы’, и притом – как проблему поэтическую и социальную одновременно.”
- <sup>49</sup> About everyday language being included in poetic speech cf. Б.И. Арватов, Синтаксис Маяковского. (Опыт формально-социологического анализа поэма “Война и мир”), *Печать и революция*, №3/1: 84-102, 1923.
- <sup>50</sup> “[...] ибо сумма языковых навыков и впечатлений, обычно определяемая, как ‘дух языка’ – прежде всего создается, языковой системой, т. е. совокупностью отношений, существующих между отдельными частями сложного языкового механизма”.
- <sup>51</sup> “формальные возможности слова ‘смеяться – смех’ детализированы почти исчерпывающе.”
- <sup>52</sup> “[...] берутся обыкновенные и всем знакомые суффиксы и приставляются к не соответствующему слову”.
- <sup>53</sup> “[...] элементы его приходится вылавливать из гуши всего матерьяла [...]”.
- <sup>54</sup> “существенно сложна и изобретательна”
- <sup>55</sup> “беспредложные опыты”.
- <sup>56</sup> “‘Заумный язык’, как язык, лишенный смысла – не имеет коммуникативной функции, присущей языку вообще.”
- <sup>57</sup> “[...] это чистая психология, обнаженная индивидуализация, ничего общего с системой языка, как социальным фактом – не имеющая”.
- <sup>58</sup> “[...] результаты подготовительной, лабораторной работы к созданию новой системы элементов социального наименования.”. Or: “[...] transrational language has only a purely nominative role, and such a role it can fulfill successfully in the sphere of social nomenclature.” – “[...] за ним таким образом остается роль чисто номинативная, и таковую он с успехом может выполнять в области социальной номенклатуры”. (Винокур 1923: 211-212)
- <sup>59</sup> More on Vinokur’s views on transrational language, cf. (Gorham 2003: 41-42).
- <sup>60</sup> “Примеры наши [...] показательны в отношении принципиальном: они вскрывают направление, в каком вообще возможна языковая инженерия, показывают как принципы языковой работы поэтов могут быть осмыслены в быту”.
- <sup>61</sup> “[...] теоретический учет которых будет производиться наукой, а разрешение их – мастерами слова – поэтами [...]”
- <sup>62</sup> “[...] перв[ыми] к овладению ‘тайной’ слова подошли [футуристы] [...]”
- <sup>63</sup> For more on the relation between the linguistic practice of A. Platonov, D. Charms and V. Chlebnikov, cf. Ben Dhooze, Прием языковой деформации. Платонов, Хармс, Хлебников, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, 63: 283-326. 2009.
- <sup>64</sup> “[...] получает величайшую ценность и по своей энергии становится близким к действительности”.
- <sup>65</sup> Platonov’s utterance is also in line with earlier statements about art and literature. In one of his earliest articles, ‘К начинающим пролетарским поэтам и писателям’ – ‘To Beginning Proletarian Poets and Writers’ (1919), Platonov discerns traditional, “individual” art from “collective” art. “Collective” art, as Platonov sees it, is art as a combined creation in time, standing next to other aspects of human activity and striving to reform reality (cf. Яблоков 2009: 260). “Individual” art is “artificial” (“искусственное искусство”) and not, therefore, real art. For “individual” art the outer form, rhythm and poetic technique are more important than the content, than “the abyss of emotion” (“бездна чувства”), which predominates in “collective art”. (Платонов 2004б: 10)
- <sup>66</sup> On this article, cf. also (Reznik 2010: 130-132).
- <sup>67</sup> “сознательное, организующее воздействие общества на язык”
- <sup>68</sup> “социальное воздействие на язык”
- <sup>69</sup> “регулировать судьбы языка”
- <sup>70</sup> “судьбы революции в языке”
- <sup>71</sup> “точное, научное понимание дела”
- <sup>72</sup> “[...] совокупность языковых явлений с уже [...] фиксированной формой, предназначенной для пользования в особых, могущих быть точно выясненными, условиях.”
- <sup>73</sup> On Vinokur’s conception of revolutionary phraseology, cf. also (Reznik 2010: 130).
- <sup>74</sup> “[...] для усвоения новых лексических элементов нужно минимальное количество ассоциаций [...]”
- <sup>75</sup> V. Lenin’s language (and its supposed innovativeness) was dealt with in several books and articles in the first years after his death. Most well known are the articles on Lenin’s language in the first issue of 1924 of *LEF*, written by Formalists V. Šklovskij, B. Ejchenbaum, Ju. Tynjanov, L. Jakubinskij, B. Kazanskij, and B. Tomaševskij. More on these and other articles, cf. (Gorham 2003: 42-45, 202-203).
- <sup>76</sup> Cf. also (Горлов 1923: 21). Gorlov explicitly refers to Vinokur’s article on revolutionary phraseology.

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<sup>77</sup> “С остальными надо говорить именно официальным языком [...] иначе они поймут, но не поверят, а тут, не поняв, поверят.”

<sup>78</sup> “Каким литературным направлениям вы сочувствуете или принадлежите?” – “Никаким, имею свое”. (Корниенко 2001: 11)

<sup>79</sup> The convergences between Platonov and Vinokur raise new questions too. Other similarities between Platonov’s style and other LEF-members’ poetic practice or views on poetic language and art may also be worth studying. In his article ‘Речетворчество (по поводу ‘заумной поэзии’)’ – ‘Speech creation (About ‘Transrational Poetry’)’ in the second issue of *LEF* (1923), for example, B.I. Arvatov, referring to R.O. Jakobson and G.O. Vinokur, also proposes linguistic innovation (“speech creation”) in literature and life in general as a means to deal with the social needs and goals of the new Soviet society. (Cf. also Stephan 1995: 80-82)

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, Band 63 (*Diesseits und jenseits der Utopien. Andrej Platonov – ein Autor zwischen allen Stühlen. Konferenz (9.10.-11.10.2008) Institut für Slavische Philologie, LMU München.*)